

SUBJECT OF THESIS :

The Relation of the Doctrine of the Word of God  
to the Doctrine of the Imago Dei.

A Study in the Theology of Professor Karl Barth

- by -

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## FOREWORD.

Prior to beginning this piece of research work in the sphere of the new theology which Professor Karl Barth is now inspiring in many lands and many languages, the investigator would like to make a few acknowledgements. Firstly, the name of Professor G.T. Thomson should be mentioned as one whose work both as a translator and interpreter of Barth's theology renders him a foremost authority on this subject in English. Without his direct help and frank criticisms, this inquiry would never have been attempted, still less completed. Secondly, acknowledgment should be made of the late Professor H.R. Mackintosh whose memory will always remain as a spur and a curb to the theological enthusiasm of those who were privileged to sit in his lecture-room. Thirdly, there is Professor John Baillie, who in the course of his lectures gave many a valuable clue to the type of criticism which any serious student of Barth must be prepared to meet and answer. Finally, I should like to mention the courtesy of Dr. Hunter in laying open the vast resources of New College Library to this investigation, and also the faithfulness of F. Bauermeister, Foreign and Art Bookseller, the Mound, Edinburgh, for keeping me in touch with the more recent copies of "Theologische Existenz heute" and with the new theological series associated with the name of Barth, entitled "Theologische Studien".

*J.F. Morris*

INTRODUCTION.

The following investigation arose out of a desire to understand and to expound a central theme in the theology of Professor Karl Barth. It has been undertaken with the object of shewing the importance of the doctrine of the imago Dei in the kind of theology which he is now writing. The difficulties attending such an undertaking are obvious.

For instance, it may be argued that in order to arrive at a sound, logical estimate of a writer's theological standpoint, it would be necessary to have available not only a complete list of his works but also the considered judgment of history as a guide and corrective to the investigation. But in the case of Barth neither of these things exist, since he is still engaged in writing his major treatise on dogmatics. This being so, does it then follow as a consequence that the task conceived is both too hazardous and too untimely to be attempted? The question seems to be unanswerable and yet on consideration the objection which it implies is by no means insuperable.

In actuality, it is necessary to have neither a full list of Barth's works nor the verdict of history upon his views, in order to reach a valid estimate of his doctrine. Of course it is a real disadvantage not to be able to refer to these in the process of research, but without them research work may proceed, since the primary factors in this thesis are belief in the task envisaged, faithfulness to Scripture, and a sufficient grasp of the nature of the theological problem as it is presented to the mind of Karl Barth. Already Barth has given to his readers a clear idea of what he is thinking.

Moreover, the research student has in this case the added advantage of proximity in time to a theologian as great in intellectual stature as Barth. The elapse of time might cause some vivid impression of this new theology to grow dim, for it is important to realise that what



Barth is saying **is** something new, not merely a new emphasis on the divine factor in revelation, not merely a statement of the old Protestant orthodoxy in modern terms, but a **genuine re-awakening**, a coming to life of thought in what might not ineptly be described as the re-birth of Reformed theology. To be caught in the movement of this theology is an advantage outweighing every disadvantage, for the experience of being convinced by the theology of Barth signifies, not the elimination, but the most strenuous exercise of the critical powers of human reason.

Thus paradoxically, reason finds its highest function in theology, in the very sphere which denies to it the inherent power to achieve knowledge of the nature and Being of God. Yet it is part of the genius of Barth as a theologian that he kindles and in no wise damps the urge of the individual investigator to find rational expression in theology. The entire spirit or motif of his writings is embodied in the Scriptural injunction to search the written Word and be wise unto salvation. When this is done, he is seen as an ally, a fellow-labourer in the intellectual vineyard of faith. Therefore the fact may no longer be denied that the flavour and content of the ensuing thesis will be of the kind found in the new Reformed theology. Consequently there now remains nothing else to do than to state in brief outline the purpose and plan which will form the guiding threads of the investigation.

It is the **aim** of this study to establish, develop, and confirm the statement that there is and can be **no true likeness to God in man, apart from the desire, power and purpose of God to create that likeness in man in and through the revelation of Himself in His Word, Jesus Christ.** The implications of this statement are positive and negative.

Positively, the actualisation of the imago Dei in the sphere of created living things depends upon the power of God to reveal or make Himself known to man in and through His Word.

Revelation is the sole concern of theology. The doctrine of God is prior to and determinative for the doctrine of man. The doctrine of the Word determines the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. The knowledge of God provides the necessary key to the understanding of man. Therefore to speak of a reflection of God in the depths of man's being apart from the power of God to reveal Himself, is clearly absurd, since God is Lord over His own reflection.

Negatively, the implication of the statement which has been made is that natural theology in all its forms is rendered untenable. Natural theology assumes that in the nature of created man there may be discerned an essential and unbroken kinship with and likeness to God apart from the revelation of God in His Word. It does not deny the supremacy and perfection of that revelation. What it seeks to establish is that the perfect revelation in Jesus Christ took place on the basis of a relation of resemblance already permanently existing between God and man. Accordingly it seeks a natural point of contact between man and God, a starting point in human nature for the theological consideration of God's self-revelation. This it finds in the *imago Dei*.

In view of the assumptions and claims of natural theology the doctrine of the *imago Dei* must be re-stated in its relationship to the doctrine of the Word of God. The first and most obvious task will be to examine, understand and then criticise the leading forms of natural theology in modern thought.

The natural starting point for this will be where natural theology appears in its most patent form, in the Roman Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis*. Thus the first Part of the thesis will be devoted to a consideration of this doctrine. The theology of Przywara as a brilliant exponent of the subject will be given special attention.

Following upon this, the theological phenomenon of theocentrism, or the natural theology of faith, will be made the object of analysis. Here the basis of modern Protestant

theology in the works of Schleiermacher will be discussed with special reference to Wobbermin and Schaefer, two modern theocentric thinkers.

The last critical aspect of the subject will be dealt with in the third Part of the thesis, in which Emil Brunner's views on the imago Dei are examined.

But throughout the polemical atmosphere of the first three Parts, the positive aim of the investigation will not be overlooked or neglected. Against the antithetical background provided by the three forms of natural theology considered, the subject of the relation between the imago Dei and the Word of God will be developed and given ever clearer definition, until in the last Part of the thesis the way is opened for a positive recapitulation and reconstruction of the doctrine of the imago Dei in its relation to revelation, while lastly and not least in significance there is given an account of the Scriptural foundations of the theological statements which have been made.



PART I.

## THE DOCTRINAL IMPLICATIONS

- of -

THE ANALOGIA ENTIS.  

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CHAPTER 1. An introductory Consideration of the Analogia Entis.

Natural theology has never received more profound acceptance and expression than in the sphere of Roman Catholicism, where it is known and interpreted as the doctrine of the analogia entis. According to many thinkers, this doctrine epitomises all that is congenial to orthodoxy as well as to the intellectual demand for a rational faith. Certainly both mysticism and intellectualism have found a secure place within the extensive area of its application, while not least among its attractions is the authority with which it has become clothed in the course of the centuries. So enshrined has it become in the hearts and minds of its upholders, that it has acquired for them and for itself the appearance of revealed truth (*veritas revelata*). But as it will be found in the course of this investigation, the foundations of this doctrine are far from being sound, and the doctrine itself on analysis and criticism is found to be an heretical expression of the doctrine of the *imago Dei*, or of man's relation of conformity to the Word of God.

The first and most obvious obstacle to the understanding of the doctrine of the Word of God in its relation to the doctrine of the *imago Dei* is the doctrine of the analogia entis. Consequently, the first task of this research will be to unfold the implications of that doctrine, and then to oppose it with relevant criticisms. As there can be no reason for doubting that this view of the starting point is as valid as any, it is now considered necessary that the basic roots of the doctrine in the *Summa Theologica* should be exposed, and that following upon this a modern version of the analogia entis should be expounded. In this way a balanced idea of the subject is achieved and the way prepared for criticism.

In this Chapter, the views of St. Thomas Aquinas regarding the analogia entis will now be presented. The importance of St. Thomas in the scheme of Roman Catholic theology is sufficiently indicated by a statement in the Preface of 'God and the Modern Mind', a book written by Hubert Box and published in 1937. According to Box, "it is purely by **reason** that Thomism must justify its claim to be not simply one philosophy among many but **the** true philosophy." "When therefore, St Thomas is quoted in this book", he adds, "it is a question not of appealing to him as a final authority, *but* rather of making use of his principles to solve our modern problems ; it is a question not so much of going back to the thirteenth century, as of bringing the Angelic Doctor up to the present time". What then are the principles of Thomism ?

The basic principle of Thomism is **the analogical character of all being**. This thought runs through the entire system of thought with which the name of the 'Angelic Doctor' is always associated. Accordingly, the question must arise : what is meant by the word 'being' ?

According to Aquinas, being implies existence and qualities. A thing has being if it exists and can be described. For example, the world has being. There are, however, different kinds of being.

There is **created** being and **uncreated** being. The world has created being ; it depends for its existence on something outside itself, on God, the first Cause. God, on the other hand, is uncreated being ; as the first Cause of all created things, He is not dependent for His existence on anything outside or external to Himself. Unlike God, the world does not possess self-contained or self-enclosed being.

But since everything that possesses being has qualities and perfections of its own, it follows that the world resembles God, its first Cause, because like Him it has being, that is, existence and qualities ; there is thus an analogy of



being. Similarly, man as part of the world has created being and therefore is a limited participation of the being of God. In his creaturely state, he is a partial copy of God's natural perfection. In virtue of his power to reason, he is able to know in part the perfection of God. **The starting point for the natural knowledge of God is thus man.** As Aquinas expresses it : "Since our intellect knows God from creatures it knows Him in so far as creatures represent Him.....God presupposes in Himself all the perfections of creatures, being Himself simply and universally perfect. Hence every creature represents Him, and is like Him so far as it represents some perfection : yet it represents Him not as something of the same species or genus, but as the **excelling** principle or whose form the effects fail short, although they derive some kind of likeness thereto, even as the forms of inferior creatures represent the power of the Sun".<sup>1.</sup>

There are, however, definite limits to the resemblance of creatures to Creator. Since God is the infinite Cause, His effects are infinite. The very limitation of the nature of creatures constitutes an imperfection and thus a dissimilarity to the Creator. "Every effect which is not an adequate result of the efficient cause, receives the similitude of the agent not in its full degree, but in a measure which fails short.....The likeness of the creature to God is imperfect, for it does not represent one and the same generic thing".<sup>2.</sup> This means that the relation of analogy between God and man never ceases to be one of analogy, never passes into one identity, God being perfect, man imperfect. They do not possess the same specific form, but because man owes his existence to God, he must resemble Him. "In this way all created things, so far as they are being, are like God as the first and universal principle of all being." <sup>3.</sup>

1. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theological, 1.13.11.

2. *ibid.*, 1.13.v.

3. *ibid.*, 1.4.111.

The possibility of theology as an exercise of reason on the subject of God arises because everything created bears some likeness to God. On the other hand, the use of terms and analogies which theology may employ in relation to this subject is strictly limited, since God's perfections are absolute, while those pertaining to the world are relative and derived. As a result of this, some terms may only be used metaphorically in reference to God. Analogical predication must therefore be conditioned by metaphorical predication. "Our knowledge of God is derived from the perfections which flow from Him to creatures, which perfections are in God in a more eminent way than in creatures. Now our intellect apprehends them as they are in creatures, and as it apprehends them it signifies them by names. Therefore as to the names applied to God, there are two things to be considered - namely, the perfections which they signify, such as goodness, life, and the like, and their mode of signification. As regards what is signified by these names, they belong properly to God, and more properly than they belong to creatures, and are applied primarily to Him. But as regards their mode of signification, they do not properly and strictly apply to God ; for their mode of signification applies to creatures. There are other names which signify these perfections flowing from God to creatures in such a way that the imperfect way in which creatures receive the divine perfection is part of the signification of the name itself, as stone signifies material being, and names of this kind can be applied to God only in a metaphorical sense. Other names, however, express these perfections absolutely, without any such mode of participation being part of their signification, as the words being, good, living and the like and such names can be literally applied to God." <sup>1.</sup>

1. *ibid.*, I.13.iii.

Already it can be seen how fundamental to the whole system of Thomism is the doctrine of the analogia entis. The way is now prepared for a consideration of a modern dialectic form of the doctrine in the works of Erich Przywara. But even in its original form, its close kinship with natural theology is clearly discernible. The natural resemblance of creature to Creator is the thought which forms the pre-supposition of this particular theology.

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CHAPTER 2. A modern dialectic Presentation of the Analogia  
Entis.

The dialectic statement of theological problems has never been illustrated more brilliantly than in the works of Przywara. This theologian has earned the respect of Professor Karl Barth, who refers to him in 'Nein!' as an authority on modern Roman Catholic theology. In fact, it was this reference<sup>1</sup> which led to the following investigation of his conception of the analogia entis, as stated in a book entitled 'Polarity', an English translation of his classic interpretation of Catholic religion.<sup>2</sup> Thus the aim of this Chapter is to present Przywara's views on the basic doctrine of Catholicism.

According to this writer, the doctrine of the analogia entis possesses a two-fold claim upon human reason to be accepted as the one true metaphysic of religion. In the first place, it assumes a fixed and given point of vantage above all that is creaturely, changing and transient in God the incomprehensible and unfathomable, in God the immanently triune Deity.<sup>3</sup> In the second place, it asserts a permanent relation of similarity between the world and God, on the ground that creation is a movement from God through which something other than God makes its appearance. In this two-fold claim, as expressed by Przywara, the influence of St. Thomas Aquinas can be clearly noted. There is the application of the principle of cause and effect and at the same time there is the idea of a first Cause, self-originating and self-contained, requiring no explanation outside itself.

As Przywara says, creation is a 'movement from God hitherwards' (processio Dei ad extra). The created

1. Karl Barth, 'Nein!' Antwort an Emil Brunner, Theologische Existenz heute, 1934, pp. 51-52.

2. Przywara, 'Polarity', Trans. Bouquet, 1935.

3. ibid., pp. 38, 88, 89.

world is a product or effect of this movement ; it originated from a divine, generative impulse. Therefore it stands in a permanent relation of resemblance to its Creator. On the basis of this relation, it is possible to envisage such an intensification of divine influence that creation itself could reveal God. This is precisely what happened in the incarnation of redemption, Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, continues the writer, the world is other than God, for it, unlike God, exists in a state of perpetual change. For this reason, it can never become identical with the Creator. Its resemblance to Him never ceases to be a resemblance : there always remains the fact of ultimate difference or dissimilarity. Thus the **dialectic** nature of Przywara's reasoning becomes apparent.

He is arguing that the relation between the world and God, is not explicable either in terms of pure similarity or of pure dissimilarity, but only in terms of a similarity within a fundamental dissimilarity. His thought, therefore, must oscillate between two opposite poles, a positive pole constituted by the idea of the world's resemblance to God, and a negative pole constituted by the idea of the world's non-resemblance to God.<sup>2</sup> This is dialecticism, though not of the Hegelian kind, the obvious difference being that in the case of Przywara's reasoning the movement of thought is poised between thesis and antithesis and never advances, as with Hegel, to the idea of a higher synthesis. According to Przywara the advantage of the kind of dialecticism which he employs is that by it all extremes in metaphysical theory are carefully avoided.

For instance, there is the extreme of **transcendentism**, as illustrated in the Kantian metaphysic. This attempts to make God the sole as well as the supreme reality, with the result that it is obliged to identify

1. *ibid.*, pp.63 (God avails Himself of the form of creation) 73,74 (Priest of creation).

2. *ibid.*, p.84.



the world with God, in order to explain the apparent or phenomenal reality of created things.<sup>1</sup> In Kantian terms, phenomena or things as they appear are described as being merely the outward expression of noumena or things as they are. The real world is thus the noumenal world. Opposed to transcendentalism is immanentism, which can only think of the world in its living actuality, and which in order to explain the reality of God must identify Him with the world.<sup>2</sup> Now to both of these extremes the doctrine of the analogia entis stands in clear opposition. This, argues Przywara, is the supreme **rational** evidence of its validity, for it neither assumes as in transcendentalism that creation must become God, in order to be related to **Him**, nor as in immanentism that God must become creation, in order to be related to **IT**. **The God of Catholicism alone is the truly transcendent Deity, since He alone can relate Himself to the world and man and at the same time remain Himself.**

Upon these grounds, Przywara argues that the doctrine of the analogia entis establishes itself as the one true metaphysic of religion. They are what constitute his argument for the **complete rationality of the doctrine**. But like all Catholic theologians, he already believes in the truth of the doctrine upon grounds completely other than those of rationality. Consequently his case for the analogia entis would be incomplete, were he not to avail himself of the argument from the **syncretistic** character of the Roman Catholic faith.<sup>3</sup> The doctrine, he contends, is not only the true metaphysic but it is the metaphysical expression of the **true religion underlying all historical religions**. The authoritative trend in Przywara's system of thought now becomes visible.

1 & 2. *ibid.*, pp. 53, 61.

3. *ibid.*, p. 87.

CHAPTER 3. The Syncretistic Argument.

As a doctrine, says Przywara, the *analogia entis* possesses a pre-eminent advantage for all who accept it, in that it represents the divine wisdom of God, bequeathed and conveyed by God to the Catholic Church, by the medium of two theologians, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. These two, by their complementary differences, lay an historical basis for the completely balanced statement of its truth. This may at once be seen by considering each in turn. The way in which Przywara does this is worthy of a close study. First of all, then, there is the Augustinian position.

The fundamental emphasis of Augustine was upon the relative similarity between Deity and creation. His foundation for the belief in God was the *argumentum ex gradibus*. He therefore thinks primarily of an "hierarchy of grades in which the likeness is ever more increasing, until in an ultimate mystical height of exaltation God is, as it were, the Crown and Goal of the cosmos."<sup>1</sup>

Historically, asserts Przywara, this conception embodies all that is deepest in the wisdom of the East, where the emphasis has always been upon the unity underlying the manifold changes evidenced in things externally. Indian philosophy, for example, has found expression in the mystic belief that the ultimate reality rotates in a circular fashion on its own axis. This belief first received complete metaphysical articulation in the works of Plato. It did not become a tenet of Catholic theology, however, until Augustine redeemed it by drawing attention to the emphasis of the *analogia entis* upon the rotation of the divine life (*processio Dei ad intra*) and the rotation of the creaturely life (*processio Dei ad extra*) being united in one rotation of God (*processio Dei*).<sup>2</sup>

1. *ibid.*, p.117.

2. *ibid.*, p.148.



The doctrinal implications of Augustinianism are given lucid expression by Przywara. As Augustine thought pre-eminently of the similarity of creation to the Creator, his idea of faith has a corresponding emphasis upon the mystical union which the soul experiences with God. Likewise his conception of sin is greatly influenced by this fact, for he thinks primarily of the negative effects of sin in separating the soul from the Object in Whom it finds its true rest. Also in logical consequence of his initial assumption, he interprets the body as the prison of the spirit, which sensitively feels the oppression and even tyranny of all fleshly trammels and stretches out its wings like a bird for utter freedom of union with its Creator.<sup>1</sup> His idea of the incarnation also has its own peculiar characteristics. The incarnation is conceived as the love which streams from the Creator and draws the creature up into itself.<sup>2</sup> In this way the outgoing and the incoming of the divine Life - a thought characteristically Eastern - is sublimated in Catholic doctrine of this type. But the culminating point in Augustine's theology is to be seen in the doctrine of the Trinity, wherein, in conformity with its type, the **economic** view is given greatest significance through the adoption of the Johannine names Light, Life and Love as well as the names of the triune God who is the source of the redemptive stream of activity.<sup>3</sup>

As he develops and expounds the historical and theological position of Augustine, Przywara presents with similar lucidity and thoroughness the complementary views of the school of Thomism.

Unlike Augustinianism, he says, Thomism stresses the relative dissimilarity of creation to the

1. *ibid.*, pp.129, 130.
2. *ibid.*, pp.131, 134, 145.
3. *ibid.*, pp.137, 138, 147, 148.

Creator. Its fundamental axiom is that God as Creator is different from and other than all the things that are external to Him or can be thought of as though external (Vatican Confession of Faith regarding Deity, Sess. 3. cap. 1).<sup>1</sup> The **hierarchy of grades is conceived as a relative one, enclosed in a unity by itself.** Though in its totality it must be regarded as the highest possible similitude to God, it necessarily falls short of being an exhaustive image, because God is incomprehensibly other than the cosmos created by Him.<sup>2</sup> In Scholastic terms, this means that the difference between God and the creature is that in the case of God the essence is identical with the existence, whereas in the case of the creature the essence is not identical with the existence. This lack of identity of essence and existence results in a state of perpetual unrest or of becoming.

Historically, says Przywara, this idea of the relative independence of the world and God is precisely the view which has always been most pleasing to Western philosophy. Western thought, unlike Eastern, has never been particularly mystical ; it has always been realistic. The reality of man in his struggle to attain to virtue has ever been its central theme. Aristotle was the first to give this theme a fully-articulated metaphysical expression. But it was left to St. Thomas Aquinas to redeem this wisdom of the West by placing a full emphasis upon the distinctness of God and the creation without destroying their unity.<sup>3</sup> In this way, the thought of the movement of God within Himself (*processio Dei ad intra*) is kept distinct from the thought of the world as relative to God in its self-contained movement (*processio Dei ad extra*), while the two thoughts are merged in the distinction between *ad extra* and *ad intra*.<sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.*, p.117.
2. *ibid.*, p.118.
3. *ibid.*, p.149.
4. *ibid.*, p.149.

When the doctrinal significance of the Thomist position is considered by Przywara, it is seen as complementary to that of Augustinianism. The view of sin is not negative, but positive. Sin is not conceived as something to be evaded by flight, but as something to be endured here on earth, to be fought against with calm assurance, in the flesh and under the grey autumnal skies.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, as it might be inferred from the serious view of sin just stated, the incarnation is represented as the divine act of condescension, in which God in the mystery of His Otherness stoops to death itself, in order to redeem man, bodily and spiritually, individually and socially (the resurrection of the dead).<sup>2</sup> Finally, the Thomist philosophy of religion culminates in its own distinctive emphasis upon the doctrine of the Trinity, in relation to which its predominant thought is that of the mystery of the inner triune life of God, filling the pious worshipper with solemn awe and reverence. In contrast to this, says Przywara, "the Augustinian trilogy Light, Life and Love.....appears only as a feeble ray of the glory of the incomprehensible God, the external fringe of the clouds which veil the light unapproachable".<sup>3</sup>

As it may be noted from this and many other places in 'Polarity', this modern exponent of Scholasticism and Augustinianism is thoroughly convinced of the truth of his interpretation of religion. At times his language passes out of the realm of cold, intellectual reasoning into that of imagination and poetry. For example, in referring to the Catholic form of evidential statement, he states : "this is one of reference to the incomprehensible, and yet of a reference which does not leap the bounds of the comprehensible, but flows on calmly, to the end, until it merges like the estuary of a river, into a sea of mystery".<sup>4</sup>

1. *ibid.*, pp.123, 134.

2. *ibid.*, pp.134f., 145f.

3. *ibid.*, p. 148.

4. *ibid.*, p. 47.



Another example of the same thing appears when he is contrasting the Augustinian and the Thomist conceptions of the incarnation. In speaking of the Augustinian view, he said : "the blood-red hue of redemption pales into the dazzling gold of triumphant transfiguration".<sup>1</sup> But in the Thomist interpretation, "the question is drawn into the terrestrial drama concerned with the fallenness of the creature. The gold of transfiguration is here only the pale background on which the blood-red hue of the self-emptying (kenosis) of God-even to the death of the Cross-stands out in strong relief".<sup>2</sup>

This tendency to colourful expression rather enhances than detracts from the merit of Przywara's style of presentation and the impression which is left on the reader's mind is that the doctrine of the analogia entis has been defended in a masterly way, not only from the side of metaphysical theory, but also from the side of history. Certainly, the admiration of Professor Karl Barth for this theologian is not misplaced. Moreover, the claim of natural theology for acceptance in the form of this doctrine appears to be as unanswerable as it is uncompromising. Yet it is the very fact of its lack of compromise and its earthly assurance of truthfulness which renders the doctrine of the analogia entis in its ancient and modern forms the first and most vulnerable object of criticism. The task of criticism now emerges.

1. *ibid.*, p. 145.

2. *ibid.*, p. 145.



CHAPTER 4. A critical View of the Analogia Entis,  
in the light of the Imago Dei.

Before engaging in this task, it might be as well to admit that the theological principles underlying this research find no place at all for any form of natural theology, including the form which it takes in the doctrine of the analogia entis. This admission is made advisedly because there are at least two types of modern Protestant theology which oppose the doctrine of the analogia entis without standing in critical opposition to all natural theology.<sup>6</sup> Here, of course, the entire trend of the argument of this discourse against natural theology must be made known, so that the line of argument taken against the doctrine of the analogia entis in particular, may be seen within the critical framework of the first three Parts. In order to proceed at once to this particular task, it is necessary to dispel certain false impressions which may have been created by the views expressed in 'Polarity'.

The freshness, vigour and originality of Przywara's presentation of religion may have given rise to the idea that it is possible to revise or remodel the doctrine of the analogia entis in such a way that it will meet with acceptance as revealed truth. But this is not so. Przywara's doctrine is still Scholasticism, though it has replaced its Mediaeval robes of Augustinianism and Thomism with a modern dialectic dress. That is why something more tangible than reason must be employed to establish its validity ; the syncretistic argument has to be introduced as a guarantee of theological truth. Przywara's final appeal is not to rational self-evidence but to reason supported by a certain conception of authority. Once that authority is removed then all that is left is a metaphysic of religion or Christian theism, as Bouquet describes it, but nothing which could be claimed to be **the one true philosophy**. Thus when impressions of

<sup>6</sup> Theocentricism and Protestant Dialecticism (E. Brunner) are here intended.

of this modern presentation of the doctrine of the analogia entis are analysed and clarified, it is found that at its very foundation there lies **the claim of the Roman Catholic Church to possess within its exclusive borders the permanent historical residuum of revealed truth.** What does this mean ?

It means that the Church is considered to be a self-contained organism, with its life-principles within itself. It means that the presence and the Lordship of God are conceived as dwelling for ever in the form of an earthly and thoroughly material succession of Priests into whose power and care are committed the lives of all men. As Przywara himself expresses it, the Church is the living manifestation of the original and indestructible relationship of creature <sup>to</sup> of Creator.<sup>1</sup> The religious relation of nature to Supernature, man to God, is the inner moving structure of the visible and invisible Church.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine of the analogia entis represents **the attempt of human reason to justify the Catholic conception of the Church and the Church's authority.** The Church, according to Przywara, is the extension of God's earthly incarnation which began in the creation of the world ; in its total creatureliness it represents the highest possible similitude to God who in Himself transcends all similitude.<sup>3</sup> The argumentum ex gradibus, which in the case of modern and ancient Catholicism is fundamental to the doctrine of the analogia entis, is used by this writer with the sole object of disclosing the nature of the Church as the material sphere in which man is to see the transcendent authority of God clearly and permanently mirrored.

1. *ibid.*, p.59.

2. *ibid.*, p.61.

3. *ibid.*, pp. 69 (highest possible similitude)  
74 (self-abnegation of God).



In view of this conception of the Church, the first criticism which suggests itself is that in the doctrine of the analogia entis the emphasis is thrown almost entirely upon **the Church** of Jesus Christ rather than upon **Jesus Christ as the Lord of the Church**. The Scriptures warn believers against the falseness of such an emphasis. As it is expressed in the Gospel of St. John : "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain ; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." (Jn. 15.16). The Church has not chosen Jesus Christ to be its Lord, but **He** has chosen the Church to be His witness in the world. Whatever authority the Church as a visible and invisible reality may possess is thus purely relative to and derived from Him. The Church lives in the proclamation of **God's Word**, not in the proclamation of a word which it can derive at will from the depths of its own self-contained being. The authority of the Church is secondary and derivative compared with the authority of Him who is free to reveal or **not to reveal Himself**, to speak **or to be silent**.

It necessarily follows from this conception of the Church and of its authority, that the existence of the Church can never be understood as if it were a self-contained organism, growing and developing upwards, with its roots imbedded in the indestructible relation of similarity which exists between creature and Creator. Jesus Christ is the **true vine** ; He is the foundation of the Church. The roots of the Church are inseparable from God and thus the Church can only be conceived **from above** downwards. The hierarchical conception of an earthly succession of Priests is an attempt to materialise the authority of Jesus Christ in the form of a permanently visible human society. This may be essential to a theologia gloriae, but in it the immeasurable gap between man and God

implied in the necessity of Christ's death on the Cross is overlooked, the sin of man against God is glossed over, and the transcendent authority of God in His Word, Jesus Christ, becomes a mere symbol of the material power of the Church to proclaim its own infallible word. Thus the first criticism of the doctrine of the analogia entis pertains to its false conception of the Church.

The second criticism of the doctrine is a logical consequence of the previous one, for the view which Przywara expresses in relation to the authority of the Church results in **the minimising of the rule of Scripture in theology and in the proclamation of the Word in the Church.**

In place of the Reformed conception of the authority of the Scriptures as the sole record of revelation, Przywara substitutes the idea of a complete body of truth revealed in the course of history to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. Through these two theologians, God has, he asserts, redeemed the wisdom of the West and the East for the sake of the Church. As a result of this pre-conception, there enters into 'Polarity' a note of overwhelming conviction and certainty which is absent from the works of Reformed theology. The reason for this is obvious.

The task of theology in Roman Catholicism is not to conform itself to the Biblical record of revelation but merely to bring into modern expression a theology already revealed and received. In the Catholic religion, the Scriptures do not possess the magisterial authority which they must possess in the Reformed Church. The idea of a revealed theology (theologia gloriae) or of dogma, divinely received, embodied in and transmitted through the tradition of the Church, takes the place of a theology of the Cross (theologia crucis) in which every fresh step of reasoning must be questioned by the rule of



Scripture, in which the theologian must confess that his **aim**, though not his possession, is **dogma**.

The Reformation was in essence the rediscovery of the Bible as the basis of the human proclamation of the Word of God to the Church and it is the supreme merit of Karl Barth that in this generation he has by means of his theology thrown new light upon this fact.<sup>1</sup> The rediscovery of the Biblical norm meant the rediscovery of proclamation. How then is the Bible normative ?

According to Barth, the Bible is normative, not because it **is** revelation in its written form, but because through the written form<sup>of</sup> the Scriptures, taken as the basis of proclamation, God has already revealed Himself and will reveal Himself again in His Word to the Church.<sup>2</sup> "The Bible is the concrete medium by which the Church recalls God's revelation in the past, is called to expect revelation in the future, and is thereby challenged, empowered, and guided to proclaim".<sup>3</sup>

This means that the Bible is above the Church as an authority, not as a textbook prescribing the correct form of dogmatic proposition, but as the book through which the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, has proclaimed and will proclaim Himself again to the Church. The Bible is the written form of proclamation, while preaching and the sacraments are respectively the spoken and acted forms of proclamation. But it is the Spirit of God in His Word which through the Scriptures makes real or living proclamation of the Word possible in the Church. As Martin Luther says in his translation of Romans 10.17 : "So kommt der Glaube aus der Predigt, das Predigen aber durch das

1. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Trans. G.T. Thomson, p.122.

2. *ibid.*, p.120.

3. *ibid.*, pp.124-125.

Wort Gottes." For the Reformers, the written form of the Scriptures was of great importance, as obviously it was the basis of spoken proclamation by the same Spirit. "Through the Holy Spirit, the Bible has proved itself to be the greatest Evangelist in the world alongside of the spoken Word."<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that this conception of the authority of the Bible in the matter of proclamation goes directly counter to the Roman conception of dogma, for it is the Bible which witnesses to the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church, the Bible also which makes it necessary to see in Jesus Christ the Lord over the existence of all dogmatic propositions. "Dogma is the agreement of Church proclamation with the revelation attested in Holy Scripture."<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christ is revelation. He cannot be limited or restricted by man's understanding or Himself. His free Lordship over man cannot be limited by the concrete formulation of certain highly approved dogmatic propositions. No dogmatic proposition can be transported as it is into the structure of preaching, nor can it ever be in itself revealed truth. Theology is, of course, a genuine activity of faith, but above it is the Bible, and above the Bible is the Lordship of Christ. Theology must therefore **seek** dogma ; it must first of all heed the Bible if it is to lead to proclamation of the Word of God in the Church. But the Bible itself is without authority until the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, makes it into a real testimony to Himself, and thus gives to theology the power to become a reliable guide to proclamation. Therefore when Barth says that the Church as the criterion of its existence, of its dogmatics, and its proclamation, he does not thereby imply any permanent materialisation of the free power of God, in the concrete forms of dogma historically approved, but he is

1. Taken from an address delivered by Professor G.T. Thomson at the Fifteenth General Council of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian system, Montreal, Canada, 1937.

2. Karl Barth, 'The Doctrine of the Word of God', Trans. G.T.T. p.304.



saying that God is Lord in His own Temple.

Thus in recapitulation of the criticisms already made, it may be said that both the authority of Jesus Christ over the Church and the authority of the Bible over all dogmatic statements constitute two facts which in their relation and difference are given a subsidiary and well nigh negligible place in the principles of thought which underlie the doctrine of the analogia entis. But in this thesis, it is now contended that neither of these two criticisms is final. On the contrary, they simply point to a yet more radical and direct criticism, not so much of the ideas **underlying** the doctrine of the analogia entis, but of the doctrine itself.

It is stated by all who uphold this doctrine that the possibility of theology and the Church depends upon a permanent relation of similarity subsisting at all times between creature and Creator, man and God. There is, it is said, an analogy of being upon the basis of which all knowledge of God depends. Clearly, no such knowledge would be possible apart from some form of analogy, some kind of correspondence between man and God. But the crucial question for theology and the Church is not the question of **being** but of **faith**. As Luther says : ".....the knowledge of God, and of faith, is no work of man, but simply the gift of God, who as he createth faith, so doth he keep it in us". (Comm. on Gal. 1.12 W.edn. 40.1.p. 130, 1.13). Barth therefore criticises the doctrine of the analogia entis in these terms : "We do not oppose the doctrine of the analogia entis by a denial of the concept of analogy. But we say that the analogy in question is not an analogia entis, but according to Rom.12.6 the *ἀναλογία τῆς γνώσεως* the correspondence of the thing known with the knowing,

of the object with the thought, of the Word of God with the word of man in thought and in speech, even as it distinguishes true Christian prophecy taking place in faith from all that is untrue."<sup>1</sup> It is not an analogy of being that makes possible the existence of theology and the Church ; it is the **analogy of faith**. The analogy, or correspondence, or conformity between God and man which does take place in the event of faith is what is meant by the phrase '**the image of God ! Whereas in Roman Catholicism the basic notion is that of the analogia entis, it necessarily follows that in Reformed theology the basic idea is that of the imago Dei.** Actually the doctrine of the analogia entis is an heretical expression of the Biblical idea of the image of God.

From very earliest times, Catholic theologians have sought an imago Dei in the world about them and even in nature of man himself, not merely as an illustration of Deity but **as an actual evidence of His presence there.**<sup>2</sup> Thus Augustine found in the three-fold attributes of the soul, memoria, intellectus, and voluntas, an actual proof of God's immanent triunity. This is an inevitable result of an idea of revelation which makes the knowledge of God accessible to man on the basis of a created similarity of creature to Creator. But wherever revelation means revelation of God in His Word, Jesus Christ, wherever it means grace, and therefore the incomparable act of divine condescension wherein God seeks the **lost** sinner, in order to redeem him in spite of all his sin, there can be no talk of such an independent and reliable source of

1. *ibid.*, p.279.

2. *ibid.*, pp.396-399 (Vestigium Trinitatis)



knowledge of God on the basis of creation.

There is no knowledge of God apart from the revelation of God in His Word. Even the knowledge of man's utter dissimilarity to God is impossible without faith. Likewise the Augustinian assumption of a highest possible similitude to God is manifestly absurd. Christ alone is the **'image of the invisible God'**. It is not a question of varying degrees of Christlikeness in the created world. It is a case of being **in** Christ or **out of** Christ. The Church, through the work of the Holy Spirit, either lives in Him and is thus a real Church, or it lives outside of Him and is therefore no Church. In the real Church alone has the **imago Dei** reality, for the entire record of the Scriptures to revelation goes to show that image of God in man **as created** is either lost or at any rate so obscured by sin as virtually to be regarded as lost, that in and through His Word, Jesus Christ, God actually did perform that miracle of conforming a man perfectly to His own likeness, and that on the basis of that revelation the possibility of likeness to God in the sphere of what contradicts Him does actually appear in the Church. The utter incapacity of man for revelation on the basis of creation, or nature, is seen for the first time in the **restoration** of that capacity **on the basis of reconciliation, or grace.**<sup>1</sup>

Thus, by way of bringing this criticism of doctrine of the analogia entis to a close, it may be said that just as the doctrine fails to take due account of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church's existence, and of the Bible's authority over theology and the Church, so also it fails **in itself** to give a true interpretation of

1. *ibid.*, p. 276.

man's relation to God, by assuming a knowledge of God and a similarity of man to God **apart from the revelation of God in His Word, Jesus Christ.** In order to guard against this fallacy, it is necessary for theology not only to bring its statements about man into harmony with the Scriptures, but also to remind itself that **God is Lord over and in His own reflection.**<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> By saying that God is Lord **in** His own reflection, it is intended to imply, that even in the process of revealing Himself through His Word in a certain man, who by faith receives knowledge of the revelation, and is made to correspond with the Word, God yet remains free. The image of God never passes into man's lordship.

PART 2.THEOCENTRICISM IN THEOLOGYCHAPTER 1. Introduction.

It was stated in Part 1 of this thesis that the basis of theology and the Church is not, as argued by Przywara, the analogical correspondence of man the created with God the Creator, but the analogical correspondence between God and man which takes place **in faith**. It is therefore necessary to speak not of the analogy of being but of the analogy of faith. To have understood this fact is to have overcome the first difficulty in the path of arriving at a true conception of the relation between the Word of God and the imago Dei. Natural theology in one of its most formidable ways of manifestation is thereby met, challenged and criticised. But at this juncture it is most important to realise that with the introduction of the conception of faith, as the human experience of God, the danger of natural theology's intrusion is not eliminated. During the nineteenth century, in the sphere of Protestantism, there appeared the phenomenon of theocentrism, which, as it will be increasingly seen, is nothing else than a **natural theology of faith**. In a sense this development is understandable.

The nineteenth century saw the awakening of man to the power which he could come to exercise through mechanical inventions over the entire natural world. As never before the unity of man with nature was sought and found. This fact is illustrated not only in science but also in literature where the instinctive urge of the human soul towards more and more self-expression revealed itself in an age of aestheticism and in an outpouring of unrivalled poetry of which a classical example is provided in the writings of Wordsworth. In such an age of romanticism, it is not to be wondered that thought of a theological or a



philosophical kind should take on a pantheistic colouring, and that it should be asserted with no little emphasis and conviction that God could be discovered in the moving, pulsating tide of natural life. Theology took the view that in the depths of man's individual and universal religious consciousness there could be found a permanent point of contact between man and God. The greatest systematic exponent of this view was Schleiermacher. It was from this theologian that modern theocentrism, or the natural theology of faith, took its rise.

According to Schleiermacher, the image of God is mirrored in the religious experience of piety in which the believer has an immediate intuition of God. "As often as I turn my gaze inward upon my inmost self", he once said in his 'Soliloquies', "I am in the domain of eternity".<sup>1</sup> The task of theology thus resolves itself into an analysis of the doctrinal content of the believer's experience. The essence of this experience is defined as a feeling of absolute or unconditional dependence. "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech."<sup>2</sup> Schleiermacher was greatly impressed by the ever-increasing and ever deepening knowledge of the content of the religious experience which had come about in the course of history. It was he who established the theocentric idea of theology as an historical study. It is not proposed, however to make a special study of Schleiermacher's thought in this Part.

The proposed object of inquiry will be to investigate modern theocentric theology as expounded by Professors Georg Wobbermin and Erich Schaeder. The clue to this subject, as in the case of the analogia entis, is given by Professor Karl Barth, but this time in his dogmatic Prolegomena, where he

1. Mackintosh. H.R., 'Types of Modern Theology', p.62.  
2. *ibid.*, p.66.

makes the following statement : "Behind the thesis of Professors Wobbermin and Schaeder of the independent being and possession of the religious man with its growing independent interest, stands the "Ecclesiam habemus" of General Superintendents Dibelius and Schian, stands the commonsense of practically the whole of our positive and liberal ministry, stands (in this point ultimately bound up with the prevailing tendency in the Church) the prevailing tendency of the pietistic community-movement."<sup>1</sup>

In this declaration there appears to be not only a reference to the influence of Schleiermacher in theocentric theology in the words 'pietistic community-movement', but an invitation to theological investigation to subject the works of Wobbermin and Schaeder to critical analysis with a view to understanding Barth's cleavage from theocentricism. Not as obviously but just as truly, the study of theocentricism leads to a fresh consideration of the subject of the Word of God and the imago Dei, since, as it has already been stated, the basic assumption of this kind of theology is that the imago Dei is clearly mirrored in the religious consciousness of the believer. The first aim will be to understand Wobbermin's theological standpoint and his arguments against the theology of Barth.

1. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Trans. G.T. Thomson, p.244.

For Schleiermacher, the consciousness of man, within Christianity, as also outside it, includes a communal aspect. It is a consciousness in which we know ourselves one with others. See H.R. Mackintosh, Types of Modern Theology, p.61 (Foot-note).

CHAPTER 2. Wobbermin's religio-psychological Circle and his Divergence from the Theology of Barth.

According to Wobbermin, the supreme authority on theology since the time of Luther is Schleiermacher. Evangelical theology must return, he maintains, 'to the line of Luther-Schleiermacher, and therefore, to the two-fold attitude against orthodoxy and rationalism.'<sup>1</sup> He is convinced that Schleiermacher rightly indicated the essence of religion by defining it as a feeling of absolute dependence.

Wobbermin strongly disputes the view that Schleiermacher's thought is too greatly coloured by subjective pantheism and insists that the nineteenth century theologian intended to make 'the strongest possible denial of all anthropocentric interpretation.'<sup>2</sup> He asserts that Schleiermacher did not mean 'feeling' in the narrow subjective sense when he was describing the nature of religion, but that he meant 'feeling' in the sense of an immediate self-consciousness in which God is given.<sup>3</sup>

"The nature of religion", he states in terms reminiscent of his great theological predecessor, "consists in man's relatedness to a higher world<sup>4</sup> in which he believes, of which he has a presentiment in faith, and on which he feels himself dependent."<sup>4</sup> In his major work, entitled 'Das Wesen der Religion' from which this definition is quoted, there is provided a wealth of illustration from ethnic religions, especially the mystic religions of India. In it, he sets forth in considerable detail his general theory of the nature of religion. But in view of the subject of

1. G. Wobbermin, Richtlinien evangelischer Theologie, 1929, p.17.
2. G. Wobbermin, Das Wesen der Religion, p.121.
3. *ibid.*, pp.66-70, pp.119-126.
4. *ibid.*, p.216
- ø Trans. of German, Ueberwelt.

this thesis, the article entitled 'Das Wort Gottes und evangelischer Glaube' is much more significant.

In this article, Wobbermin sets out to show how both from an historical and a psychological standpoint, Christianity expresses in the highest degree the nature of universal religion. His argument takes the form of a religio-psychological circle<sup>ø</sup> in which it may be contended that neither God nor man is theology's starting point but one or the other according to what pole of the relationship is intended. In other words, he sees in the human experience of God a **polar** relationship, in which the initiative rests with God. In the religious experience of faith, God exercises complete priority. Unless God speaks there can be no hearing of His Word, no faith. Consequently, all theologies which assume a direct, natural knowledge of God in man on the basis of some unblemished relic of the image of God must be rejected. As Wobbermin declares : "From an ontological point of view, the Word of God establishes faith and not vice versa. The two poles are not interchangeable. If this correlative relationship is not strictly observed, perplexities and inner contradictions result...."<sup>1ø</sup> At the same time, he is also certain that the religious man plays an important part in revelation. In fact, **it is impossible not to feel that the aim of the theocentric thinker is to reach a separate consideration of the possibilities of man in his Christian, religious, or pious experience, in a circular manner by way of an emphasis upon God's priority and initiative in revelation.** This aim is but thinly disguised in statements

ø Cf. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Eng. Trans. G.T. Thomson, p.243.

1. G.Wobbermin, Das Wort Gottes und ev. Gl., 1931, p.24.

ø In the Theologische Zeitung, 1933, Nr.1, Wobbermin praises H.R. Mackintosh in an appreciation of the 'Forgiveness of Sins' as a champion of polarity.



of which the following is but a single example. "If evangelical theology wishes to be Church theology at all, and to serve the Church, it must place the greatest importance upon the fact that the relation of faith is actually a relation of connection, a relation of pole with counter-pole, that is to say, a relation of person with person, an I-Thou relation in the strictest sense of the term, in the case of which everything depends upon the real connection of the divine 'I' with the human 'Thou', and only after that, reversely, upon that of the human 'I' with the divine 'Thou'.<sup>1</sup>

It is actually the 'reverse' connection, the human 'I' with the divine 'Thou' which for Wobbermin provides the central focus of theological interest. In and through the 'prior' revelation of God in His Word, it is assumed that man is inwardly and permanently transformed. Henceforth, the imago Dei is conceived as something fixed in the religious experience of the believer, and as therefore providing a basis upon which theology may build its system of doctrine. The historical and psychological methods of approach now become applicable. Theocentricism, or the theocentric emphasis in theology, is thus seen to be the theology of Schleiermacher in a more recent form.

It may also be seen that opposition to 'all anthropocentric and ego-centric theology, to all mere phenomenology of the religious consciousness',<sup>2</sup> as Max Strauch has expressed it, does not run very deep in the sphere of theocentric thought. After the initial emphasis upon God's priority in revelation, it is the religious man, growing in the image of God, by his own free participation in and co-operation with the grace of God, who comes to have 'a growing independent interest'.<sup>3</sup>

1. *ibid.*, p.27.

2. Max Strauch, *Die Theologie Karl Barths*, p.54.

<sup>3</sup> See reference already made to Barth's statement concerning Wobbermin and Schaefer in Part II, Ch.1.



The centrality of the religious man in theocentric theology explains Wobbermin's divergence from the theology of Karl Barth. The forms which this divergence takes will not only provide a fitting climax to this Chapter but will also illuminate the nature of theocentricism.

Wobbermin objects to Barth's theology for three reasons, the first historical, the second psychological, and the third doctrinal. The three may be dealt with in turn.

In the first place, says Wobbermin, Barth makes the statement that the Word of God has become history, but that it has no history. This, he argues, 'is as unhistorical as it is unpsychological.'<sup>1</sup> "Barth underestimates the significance of historical research and of historical thought".<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, historical thought in itself is not yet theological thought,<sup>3</sup> but "historical thought in conformity with the nature of things, stands within the theological task not simply on its periphery."<sup>4</sup> In order to discover what God actually does say, it is necessary to have "an exact consideration of particular circumstances and connections."<sup>5</sup> "This also holds true of the centre of the history of revelation : Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> Barth's theology is simply a 'reversion to speculative metaphysics'.<sup>7</sup> By neglecting the historical approach, Barth has clearly failed to see the development of the theology of the Word of God via Luther and Schleiermacher, and has thus destroyed the historical foundations of his own doctrine.

In the second place, Wobbermin points out, Barth's theology is untenable because it allows no place for the psychological approach to religion, and therefore omits to take account of the 'intimate personal experience' of faith.

1. G.Wobbermin, Das Wort Gottes und evangelischer Glaube, 1931 p.18.

2-6. *ibid.*, p.17.

7. *ibid.*, p.9.

This omission springs from an inadequate conception of the theological task. Since the Bible is the record of revelation, it is also the record of faith.<sup>1</sup> But "the witness of faith is only accessible - at least in its ultimate depths - to intimate personal experience".<sup>2</sup> By failing to consider the authority of experience, Barth also fails to understand the nature of faith in its fulness and uniqueness. A better understanding of the psychological aspects of faith would have prevented that 'reversion to dogmatism' which is characteristic of his Prolegomena ; at the same time, his thought would have been more truly 'evangelical'.<sup>4</sup> Faith apprehended in the evangelical sense means "divine relatedness to the Word of God, but that means intimate personal experience".<sup>5</sup>

In the third and last place, asserts Wobbermin, Barth's theology is unsound on the three doctrines of faith, Scripture and revelation.

In dealing with the doctrine of faith, Barth appeals to Luther's thesis (that the Word of God establishes the article of faith) in such an ambiguous way that he upsets the decisive problem of theology, for he contends that "the Word of God is not grounded in the Christian faith but that the Christian faith is grounded in the Word of God."<sup>6</sup> "This is certainly right as a judgment of faith but Barth forgets to add that his very argument is already a judgment of faith and presupposes faith".<sup>7</sup> "Out of this there comes the danger that the evangelical understanding of faith may be intellectually obscured."<sup>8</sup>

On the subject of Biblical inspiration, declares

1-2. *ibid*, p.16.  
 3-4. *ibid.*, p.17.  
 5. *ibid.*, p.5.  
 6-7. *ibid.*, p.9.  
 8. *ibid.*, p.9.

Wobbermin, Barth is similarly unsound, for when he says that the Bible **is** the Word of God and that revelation is indirectly identical with the reality of the Bible, he is plainly reverting to the old Protestant doctrine of verbal inspiration and supporting it. Though he does admit the indirectness of revelation, he constantly identifies Scripture and revelation. Furthermore, he regards the Old Testament as being on the same level as the New in witnessing to the Word of God. This is nothing but sheer dogmatism and can only be corrected by saying that the Old Testament revelation prepares for the New Testament revelation in Jesus Christ and that the former is subordinate to the latter, since the revelation of grace is superior to the revelation of law.<sup>1</sup>

But according to Wobbermin, Barth commits his greatest blunder by supporting Thurneysen when he says : "the statement of revelation that God speaks is identical with the statement that man hears."<sup>2</sup> By doing this, argues the theocentrist, he undermines the whole idea of polarity in revelation.

The divergence of Wobbermin from the theology of Barth having thus been stated, theocentricism in theology reveals itself as a development in thought not differing in kind from the theology of Schleiermacher, wherein man the historical, psychological and religious being is the supreme centre of interest and inquiry.

When the theology of Erich Schaeder is likewise submitted to analysis, this impression is strengthened rather than weakened. At the same time, the underlying strain of aestheticism in theocentric thought becomes discernible. Schaeder's doctrine of faith will thus provide the next subject of investigation.

1. *ibid.*, p.17 (Cf. pp.73-75 and p.131 Appendix (Thesis)).
2. Ed. Thurneysen, *Das Wort Gottes und die Kirche*, 1927, p. 222.



CHAPTER 3. Schaeder's Doctrine of Faith-Mysticism.

The theological views of Schaeder might not ineptly be described as those of a typical Christian mystic. The religious experience of faith is conceived to be the starting point of theology, while faith is characteristically defined as the experience of unity with Christ in which the attractively compelling factor is Christ Himself, the objective source of reference. Without God in Christ, says this theologian, the experience of faith would be impossible. In Christ was revealed the 'mighty, sovereign grace of God.' Since faith implies a revelation of grace, it may be considered from two points of view, objective and subjective.

Objectively, the source of reference in faith is God in Christ. This objective factor constitutes faith's *sine qua non*. As Schaeder points out in 'Das Geistproblem', "the knowledge of God, spiritually achieved, as spoken of by Paul, implies an historical, supra-historical condition of activity without which it could not exist."<sup>1</sup> "It has its ground entirely in the absoluteness of divine grace, in the absoluteness of Christ as the Bearer or Mediator of grace."<sup>2</sup> "The question here and no other is that of the absoluteness of Christ which is given with the full, personal possession of the Spirit of God.....Just as we have represented it.....faith is determined completely by the nature or character of its object, or its point of reference. The spirit of truth united to the Gospel, moves to a complete faith. The absoluteness of Christianity consists subjectively in the unconditionalness of trusting faith, objectively in the unconditionalness of the mighty, sovereign grace of God, and of Jesus Christ its personal Bearer".<sup>3</sup>

1. E. Schaeder, *Das Geistproblem*, 1924, p.134.

2. *ibid.*, p.139.

3. *ibid.*, p.140 (Footnote.)

At the same time, Schaefer hastens to add, faith is a subjective experience which is capable of analysis and fixation from a human standpoint. "From the Word of the Gospel, from God and Christ, there issues upon us the effect of an unconditional constraint which is the same as our absolute liberation."<sup>1</sup> Faith exists "in the form of a subjective representation or perception in our consciousness", as the effect or impression made upon us by the 'majesty of God' and by 'His grace, which is related to us in Christ.'<sup>2</sup> This subjective impression is formed through the proclamation of the Gospel.<sup>3</sup> It possesses an active and a passive aspect. It is something which happens to us, and yet it is not merely the effect of our {subjective personality'. Faith bears the stamp of our psychical nature and is our real psychical possession. Yet it is foreign to us. "A spiritual something here makes itself felt, something which does not belong to our natural state of being, and which is utterly different from what we are."<sup>4</sup> For this reason, every psychological attempt to understand the subjective phenomena of faith fails.<sup>5</sup>

Schaefer desires to demonstrate that faith is a mystical experience. For example, he says : "Faith or the consciousness of faith and mysticism belong together and indeed, it is the Spirit of God who makes mysticism an element of faith".<sup>6</sup> "The mystical relationship with God, which the Spirit of God brings to pass in faith, shows itself quite clearly as a relationship of a finite, conditioned person to an infinite, unconditioned person".<sup>7</sup> The mysticism of faith, he says, binds the believer to the moving tide of history and simultaneously confronts him

1,2,3,4.    ibid. p.64.  
 5.           ibid., p.65.  
 6.           ibid., p.118.  
 7.           ibid., p.119.

with a clear moral duty in the world. "If the Spirit-mysticism of which we are here is speaking, binds the believer to history, it is also implied that it binds him to the world..... If a man retains his place in the world in the sphere of mysticism, he receives at the same time his clear moral duty within the world."<sup>1</sup> Similarly it is the mystical conception of faith which preserves the balance between individualism and socialism and quite as characteristically combines the immanent and the transcendent aspects of reality. In each case it is the Spirit of God who brings this about. "But it is done in the mysticism of faith".<sup>2</sup>

Thus analysed and presented, Schaeder's doctrine of faith-mysticism appears like the theology of Wobbermin as a typical example of theocentric thought and as having a close and unmistakable kinship with the theology of Schleiermacher. The initial emphasis upon God's sovereign activity in producing faith passes into a consideration of the mystical experience which a believer may enjoy permanently with God. A permanent synthesis of man and God, nature and grace, is thus assumed. The atmosphere of Schaeder's works is that of aestheticism. There is present the Greek ideal of harmony and balance, the conviction that beneath all discordant appearances there lies a fundamental unity betwixt God and man.

It is true that Schaeder welcomes the thought of contrast between God and man. It is also true that he praises Kierkegaard and Barth in this regard and that he attributes the success of Barth's epoch-making book, entitled 'The Word of God and the word of man', to its new and attractive note of contrast.<sup>3</sup> But still the fact remains unconcealed that the value of contrasts and discords according to this writer is that they serve by emphasis to throw into still stronger relief the essential and permanent unity of God and man in the mystical experience of faith. Schaeder remains a theocentricist. Like

1. *ibid.*, p.124.  
3. *ibid.*, p.130.

2. *ibid.*, p.129.



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1. *ibid.*, p.124.

2. *ibid.*, p.129.

3. *ibid.*, p.130.

Wobbermin he seeks to establish his theology upon faith, conceived as a permanent state of conformity to God in the experience of man. The underlying assumption of both of these writers is the same : the imago Dei is thought to be capable of fixation, analysis and description on the basis of the religious experience.

CHAPTER 4. A Criticism of Theocentricism.

In its emphasis upon the priority of God in revelation, theocentric theology appears at first sight to offer considerable aid to the understanding of the relation between the Word of God and the imago Dei. In this Chapter, however, it will be the task of inquiry to show how this type of theology actually stands in the way of the attempt to reach such an understanding. At the same time, it will be observed, as in the case of the doctrine of the analogia entis, that in the process of opposing theocentricism, there naturally appear the lines along which a solution of the problem of this research may profitably be sought.

The first objection to the theocentric position is that its approach to the problem of revelation is both wrong and misleading. In spite of its insistence on the priority of God in revelation and on its complete 'opposition to all anthropocentric and egocentric theology', its actual approach to the Christian faith is by way of a general theory of religious experience. This was well illustrated in the case of Wobbermin, whose definition of religion, when distinguished from its theocentric trappings, shows no advance at all on Schleiermacher's 'feeling of absolute dependence ! But even Schaeder in dealing with the subjective and objective aspects of faith, presupposes the possibility that faith can as an experience be submitted to such an analysis ; he too is basing his theology on a general theory of the mysticism of religious experience. In each case, the starting point is man and what the inquirer knows, or imagines he knows, about the human possibility of knowing God apart from the revelation of God in His Word, Jesus Christ. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, the theological terminus a quo is the religious man, not God.



In order to bring this criticism down to something more definite, it may be said that **theocentricism seeks by its doctrine of revelation to materialise the imago Dei in the form of Christian piety, or religious consciousness, or the mystical experience of faith.** The purpose of this materialisation is to establish the enlightened judgment of the converted man as an authority above the Scriptures and above the Church. Instead of the Roman Catholic hierarchy of the Priests there thus appears the Protestant hierarchy of the pious, the basis of which is the thought that faith can be given separate study and attention **apart from** the revelation of God in His Word. It is true that the theocentricist may speak as though the authority of that revelation were of supreme importance, but he speaks in such a way that this emphasis passes from God to man, and the impression that remains is that in the ultimate issue, it is to man, the religious, that the Church must listen, if it is to be authoritative. The results of this are clear enough in practice.

From theocentricism, there comes the idea that the qualities of the imago Dei may be read off the individual and corporate life of the visible and permanently developing Christian Church. Somehow or other, the Church comes to be detached from the authority of its Lord; and its proclamation is reduced to self-monologue. The whole idea of revelation as God's free Act in His Word and by the power of the Spirit to create or not to create a living witness to Himself in the sphere of that which contradicts Him, even in its highest and most pious form, is lost ; the place of a real faith is taken by a humanly possessed and controlled piety. Theocentricism may indeed point to the Bible as the norm of theology, but in effect it utterly undermines the authority of Scripture by making the religious experience a source of doctrine. This occurs through a fundamental misinterpretation of the relation between revelation and faith.

Wobbermin maintains that the relation between the Word of God and faith in revelation is one of **polarity : the fact is that it is one of unity in correspondence**. According to the theocentricist, it is as true to say that the Word of God is based on faith as it is to say that faith is grounded on the Word of God.<sup>ø</sup> But if the relation between the Word of God and faith is one of unity in correspondence, only one **irreversible statement** can be acknowledged as true, namely, that faith is based on the Word of God. Religion and the religious experience may be universal, but neither of these is faith.<sup>x</sup> Religion is a human possibility, but not faith. Faith contradicts experience, even the highest and the noblest experience, for it is what happens to man on the basis of God's Word, revealed or spoken. Outside the act in which God reveals Himself, faith has no meaning and no basis in human experience. But when that act of self-revelation does occur, man's self-determinate existence is actually determined by the Word of God ; faith takes place as a human experience ; man is conformed to the image of God.<sup>1</sup> As Barth says : "the involution, nay, oneness of the divine Logos and the human in faith cannot and may not either be hushed up or denied."<sup>2</sup>

Faith is an experience, an experience in which the combination of all psychical factors is present and which in each case will find its predominate outlet in reason or feeling or practical activity. This seems to contradict what already has been said. Actually there has been no contradiction. The only contradiction is the occurrence

ø Cf. Wobbermin, *Das Wort Gottes*, p.9.

1. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Trans, G.T. Thomson, pp.233-239.

2. *ibid.*, p.277.

x 1 Peter 1.21.

of faith itself as an experience, that is, the occurrence of something which in its essence is not experience or any possibility of experience but only the correspondence of man with God's Word. The utter uniqueness of faith as a human possibility is a fact completely overlooked by the theory of polarity in revelation.

Correspondence of man to God's Word means something different for every individual addressed by God in revelation. In every particular instance of faith, God has something quite fresh and quite unique to disclose. Revelation is never general; it is always individual and special. The man who is apprehended by God in faith is conscious that in the very moment of apprehension something is happening which he could never create or realise for himself out of his human possibilities. In that moment he knows that he must believe in faith and that faith never passes over into his possession. As Ewalt Quittschau says in a recent article: 'we believe that we believe.'<sup>1</sup>

It follows as a logical consequence of this view of faith and revelation, that the psychological approach to the 'intimate personal experience' of faith, as advocated by Wobbermin, not only can never give a final explanation of faith, but can never lead theology **a single step** towards the understanding of faith. Similarly, since the imago Dei is real only in faith, it too will evade all such efforts at experiential explanation or control. Both faith and the imago Dei are as inscrutable as the Word of God. This thought at once suggests the last and conclusive objection to theocentric theology.

Theocentricism fails to take sufficient account

ø 1. Ewalt Quittschau, Von der Erhaltung der Welt, 1940, Theologische Existenz heute, 68, p.5.



of the mystery of God's revelation in His Word. This is to be seen with special clearness in the case of faith-mysticism, as represented by Schaeder. Admittedly it does require the terminology of mysticism in order to describe the unity which takes place between man and God in the event of revelation; a 'mystic train'<sup>ø</sup> of thought is inevitable. But the experience of faith is much more than mystical, for inseparably associated with the philosophy of mysticism there goes the idea of the intermingling of the human spirit with the supramundane Spirit of God, through the striving of man to achieve union with what is immeasurably beyond him. Theology does not and cannot imply such mysticism, but it does imply mystery, the mystery of a relationship to Him with whom it is impossible to be related, whose nature is hidden even in the act of self-disclosure. With God there can be no intermingling; there can only be correspondence in faith.

Paul refers to this mystery, for in writing to the Colossians, he speaks of Jesus Christ the eternal Son, as the '**image of the invisible God.**'<sup>1</sup> In this vein, he also speaks of the proclamation of God's Word as making known "the mystery which hath been hid from the ages and from the generations, but now is made manifest to his saints."<sup>2</sup> This mystery, he declares to the Colossians, is 'Christ in you,' or as theology would say, Christ proclaiming Himself in the word and works of His witnesses.<sup>3</sup> John records the same fact in the words of Jesus to Philip:

ø. K. Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Trans. G.T.T., p.254.

1. Col. 1.15a.      2. Col. 1.26.      3. Col. 1.27.

"he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."<sup>1</sup> In every case, revelation implies the self-disclosure through the Word, Jesus Christ, of Him whose nature must ever remain undisclosed and undisclosable. In this fact there is contained the answer to Wobbermin's objection to the idea of revelation in the theology of Barth, on the ground that it is 'unhistorical.'

Revelation is God the Creator-Father revealing Himself in and through His express image, Jesus Christ. It is God making Himself known in time and in the midst of creatureliness. But God is eternal, holy, loving: the world of time and history is the world of sinful, fallen men. Therefore to speak of revelation is to speak of an event which from a human standpoint must always appear self-contradictory, miraculous, impossible. Yet according to the Biblical witness, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1.14). God the Son entered history. This implies the becoming historical of Him who has no history, namely, the eternal Son. God, the Son, was therefore **in** history; His purpose to reconcile man to God means such self-humiliation, such condescension. And yet in the very nature of things, He could not have been **of** history. Thus there appear the following and important implications for the theme of this thesis.

Jesus of Nazareth was truly a man, born of Mary, of the royal lineage of David, a carpenter of Nazareth. Yet he was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and was thus the form in whom by a miraculous act of condescension, God chose to reveal Himself in history, in order to reconcile man to Himself. At the same time, it should be understood that even in this act and precisely in this act as in every case of revelation, God remained God, and was thus free to appear or not to appear, to speak or to be silent in the form of His self-revelation. It was not Jesus who made God his Father: it was the Father who

1. John 14.9.

made Jesus the man, His son in the flesh. As Jesus said: "the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." (Jn.14.10b). It can be seen that it was not history which made Jesus a revelation of God in His Word: it was God in His Word who made Jesus of Nazareth the historical event in which He made Himself known to man. In the freedom of God in His Word to reveal **or to hide Himself** in the historical form of Jesus, we find the basis for that truly enigmatical cry of Jesus on the Cross: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mt.27.46). In the lowly birth of Jesus as well as in shame of the Cross, the Biblical writers bring to our notice the inescapable **mystery** of God's Word and it is that impenetrable mystery which shuts out all mysticism as an interpretation of God's revelation to man in Christ, and which makes it vain for theocentrism to look for a correspondence with God's Word on our side. <sup>ø</sup>

In concluding this critical survey of theocentric theology, it is appropriate to acknowledge that the ideas which formed the basis of criticism were suggested by Professor Karl Barth in his Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics, Volume 1, Part 1. Especially relevant to this purpose and to the whole task of inquiry into the relation of the Word of God to the imago Dei, was found that section which dealt with 'the root of the doctrine of the Trinity' (pp.349-383). There, the conception of God's 'historical revealedness' is examined and interpreted. The mystery of God's revelation is shown by Barth to be the freedom and Lordship in which God is able to proceed out of

<sup>ø</sup>. Karl Barth, Doctrine of the Word of God, Trans. C.T. Thomson, p.209.



Himself in order to bring about a new creation in the midst of the old, historical, fallen creation **and yet remain Himself, without in the least degree becoming fused with the world created and preserved by Him.** As it is pointed out, revelation means that God is able in the freedom of His Word to veil Himself in the process of unveiling and to unveil Himself in the process of veiling. To say this is to point to a mystery, not to any kind of mystery, such as science might suggest in the course of investigating the facts of nature, or as psychology might postulate in dealing with the facts of the mind or of experience, but the mystery which defies all attempts at analysis or understanding, the mystery in which **God speaks and man hears.** It is precisely by relation to the mystery of God's speech, when man's word and God's Word miraculously correspond, that the futility of attempting to **materialise** the imago Dei in the religious experience as a permanent possession of man is finally realised. In the effort to see in faith an experience, humanly realisable and attainable, theocentrism overlooks the complete mystery of God's revelation in His Word and thus proves itself incapable of grasping the significance of the faith-experience itself, as illustrated, for example, by him who cried out in the presence of Jesus, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."<sup>1</sup> In the midst of faith, we cry out for new faith. Paul the great apostle to the Gentiles speaks of himself, and means that he is, the 'chief' among sinners.<sup>2</sup> Thus for theology, the religious experience of which the theocentrists speak can be neither a starting point nor a stopping place.

1. Mk.9.24.

2. Tim.1.15.

## PART III

## THE PROBLEM OF THE POINT OF CONTACT

## A STUDY

## in

## The theological Cleavage

## between

## Karl Barth and Emil Brunner

CHAPTER 1. Summary and Transition to Brunner's Standpoint.

In the two preceding Parts, the plan of this thesis as outlined in the Introduction has been strictly adhered to, with a resulting clarification of the problem of the relation between the Word of God and the imago Dei. Natural theology has been expounded and criticised, firstly in its most positive form in the doctrine of the analogia entis, and secondly, in its more indirect manifestation in the sphere of modern Protestantism, in theocentricism or the natural theology of faith.

Common to both of the theologies which have been considered was the endeavour to establish in the nature of man a point of contact for divine revelation. In the case of the doctrine of the analogia entis, this point of contact was found in an hierarchy of grades rising from nature to grace and revealing at each successive grade an increasing likeness to God. In the case of theocentric thought, the point of contact in nature for grace was found in the state of Christian piety, or the religious consciousness, conceived as reflecting in a discernible, fixable, and analysable way the nature of God in His Word, Jesus Christ. It may now be said, by way of a critical summary and estimate of these two schools of thought, that both fail because they attempt to base the doctrine of the imago Dei upon human possibilities and aptitudes for revelation and therefore upon something other than God in the power of His Word to

conform man to His own likeness. Both are forms of natural theology, which according to Barth is any "system of thought (positive or negative) which is ostensibly theological in that it pretends to be an interpretation of divine revelation, whose **object** is different from the revelation of God in Christ, whose **path** is thus fundamentally different from the exegesis of Scripture."<sup>1</sup>.

As the work of criticism proceeds, opposition to natural theology becomes more defined. It is realised that only reasoning which springs from faith can result in genuine theology and that while all theology is and must operate with philosophical ideas, not all philosophical theology is to be trusted as interpretative of the idea of revelation as recorded in the Scriptures. The line of cleavage between natural theology and theology as it truly serves the Church and the Church's Lord has thus become more definitely marked. At the same time, the problem of the point of contact between man and God is seen to be related inextricably to the Biblical thought of what happens when God speaks in reconciling terms to man and man hears or is reconciled to God. As it has been admirably expressed by Barth: "The reconciliation of man with God in Christ includes in itself or else begins with the fresh establishment of the lost point of contact. This point of contact is not real outside faith but only in faith. In faith man is created **for** the Word of God, existing **in** the Word of God, not in himself, not in virtue of his humanity and personality, not from the standpoint of creation, for what is possible from the standpoint of creation from man to God has actually been lost through the Fall. Thus this point of contact also, like everything become real in faith, i.e. through the grace of reconciliation, can only be spoken of theologically, and not theologically and philosophically."<sup>2</sup>.

1. Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner, 1934, p.12

2. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Eng. Trans G.T.T., pp. 273-274.



It was in 1934, that Emil Brunner challenged this conception of the point of contact and once again by a new emphasis upon what was possible to man on the basis of 'humanity' and 'personality', from the 'standpoint of creation', raised the question of a natural theology serving the Church. The Barth-Brunner controversy began and it was the doctrine of the imago Dei which proved itself to be the chief factor in throwing into light the contradictory character of the two theologies involved.

In relation to the problem of the relation between the Word of God and the image of God, this controversy has had a most salutary effect, for it has made it clear to any one investigating this problem, that if any authoritative theological statements are to be made concerning the image of God, a decision for or against natural theology must be taken. It is to the credit of Barth as a theologian that he was able to point out to the Church by a consideration and criticism of Brunner's doctrine of the point of contact in man for revelation, how necessary it is to decide against natural theology and to guard against its inroads. The task of this research is therefore the critical one of investigating Brunner's theological standpoint, his objections to the theology of Barth and finally his mistaken conception of the imago Dei.



CHAPTER 2. The Doctrine of the Negative Point of Contact.

In order to arrive at a satisfactory idea of Brunner's natural theology, it is necessary to see that his present theological conceptions already existed in embryonic form in that original and illuminating work entitled "The Mediator". In this there may be found, stated with all the vigour of the Kierkegaard-dialecticism, the thought of a natural, though negative aptitude of man for revelation on the basis of creation. This was the doctrine of the negative point of contact.<sup>1.</sup>

According to Barth, this earlier doctrine represented a 'vivid', 'tempting', as well as 'dangerous' method of theological reasoning.<sup>2.</sup> He even admits that around about 1920 and later in his Commentary to Romans, there might have been considerable evidence of the Kierkegaard-Heidegger school of dialecticism in his own writings.<sup>3.</sup> In the Credo he speaks of the dialectic tradition and of its effect as seen in his former usage of such terms as 'Hohlraum' (void) and 'Todeslinie' (lit., deathline, that is, death as the absolute limit of earthly existence).<sup>4.</sup> He quotes these instances in order to illustrate how a particular kind of philosophy may influence a theologian in spite of his own avowed object to expound and to do nothing else than expound the Scriptures.<sup>5.</sup> Theology, he declares, cannot avoid being philosophical, but it cannot and must not be bound to or dominated by any one philosophy, or any group of philosophies; it must not aim at being either realism or idealism or a combination of the two. In view of these statements, the doctrine of the negative point of contact as expounded by Brunner is seen to owe its predominant features to the philosophy of Kierkegaard.

1. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Auth. Trans, G.T. Thomson, 1936, p. 271.
2. Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner, 1934, p. 50.
3. *ibid.*, p. 50.
- 4.&5. Karl Barth, Credo, 1936, p.159.

The idea which particularly impressed Brunner in the works of the great Danish philosopher and theologian, was that of the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity, man and God.<sup>1</sup> Revelation, said Kierkegaard, implies an inherent and ineradicable paradox, in that it signifies the union of two irreconcilables, man who is finite and God who is infinite. For example, the incarnation represents the union of the human and the divine in the historical fact of Jesus; to reason this is a sheer contradiction, for God and man are mutually exclusive in content and significance. How can man the sinner be united to God the sinless? asks Kierkegaard. The very thought evokes a feeling of utmost despair in the human soul, and yet, he says, it is precisely in the attitude of despair that man finds the power to leap out into the unknown ; he discovers faith ; he finds God.

In "The Mediator", Brunner avails himself of the views thus expressed, in order to express his own theological standpoint, though with an optimism which is foreign to the 'gloomy Dane.' There is only one response which man can make before God, he says, and that is despair, for God is provoked to wrath by the spectacle of human sin. Even on the basis of creation and apart from the revelation of grace and forgiveness in Jesus Christ, human reason can have a genuine, though 'twi-light knowledge'<sup>2</sup> of God's wrath, is able 'of its own initiative' to have an 'increasing assurance' of this fact, and in consequence can come to a knowledge of its true self in despairing of its own existence. In despair, man corresponds to God in His wrath.<sup>3</sup> Because man has the capacity to despair in the presence of God, it follows according to Brunner that in spite of sin and the Fall there remains in

1. J.A. Bain, Søren Kierkegaard, 1935, p.75.

2. Emil Brunner, The Mediator, Auth. Trans., Olive Wyon, p.151.

3. ibid., p.152.



human nature an 'openness', a 'void', of which God in His revelation of mercy in Jesus Christ can avail Himself as a real, if negative, point of contact. Although there is no direct reference to the *imago Dei* in his earlier statements, Brunner clearly implied even in them that there remained in man in spite of sin, some unblemished vestige of the *imago Dei*, some underlying continuity betwixt man and God, which nothing could destroy. On the other hand, he did not forget to emphasise the discontinuity wrought by sin.

"Sin", he says, "is the gulf which separates God and man."<sup>1</sup> It is what makes the relation between God and man one of irreconcilable, unbridgable, and fatal opposition.<sup>2</sup> There is no part of human existence which is not marred, twisted, and corrupted not only by sins but by *sin* itself in its individual particularity and social solidarity.<sup>3</sup> Philosophical systems which court pantheism end by denying evil, and thus completely fail to realise the depth of the distinction between creature and Creator, caused by sin.<sup>4</sup> The fact that in experience man is confronted with a categorical imperative of duty, only deepens the sense of separation between him and God, and awakens the consciousness of despair. Instead of the Kantian dictum, "thou oughtest, therefore thou canst,"<sup>5</sup> there should be substituted the dictum "thou oughtest, therefore thou canst not."

In these as in many other statements the utter denial of natural theology is suggested, and yet by his constant assertion of a genuine knowledge of God apart from the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, Brunner even in this earlier phase of his thought is seeking to establish a place for natural theology in his doctrine

1. *ibid.*, p.291.
2. *ibid.*, p.40.
3. *ibid.*, pp.139, 143, 145.
4. *ibid.*, p.123.
5. *ibid.*, p.148.

of the negative point of contact in man for revelation just as surely as Przywara was seen to be doing in his dialecticism. In 1934 this underlying motive in his theology was unreservedly expressed in the now familiar article entitled "Natur und Gnade." In this article he made the following statement: "It is the task of our theological generation to find its way back to a true natural theology."<sup>1</sup> The next Chapter will be concerned with the discovery of how Brunner proposed in this article to establish a 'true natural theology.'

1. Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade, zum Gespräch mit Karl Barth*, Zweite, stark erweiterte Auflage 1935, p.44.

CHAPTER 3. Brunner's natural Theology.

In "Natur and Gnade" Brunner sets out with the direct purpose of establishing the right kind of natural theology. At the same time, the investigator cannot help noting that the compelling vigour, prophetic zeal, and tense atmosphere which marked "The Mediator", have now to a great extent vanished from this writer's style of utterance. No longer can there be felt the stress and struggle<sup>ø</sup> as the contrasted conceptions of continuity and discontinuity in man's relation to revelation fight for the supreme place in the dialectic presentation of his theology. It is as though the theological impulse has died and been replaced by the philosophical purpose of achieving a balanced synthesis of opposites. The doctrine of the negative point of contact is developed into the fully articulated doctrine of the **formal image of God, as the basic postulate of all genuine natural theology.** On the basis of the distinction between the **formal** and the **material** aspects of the image of God, Brunner argues that there are two kinds of revelation, one called **sustaining** revelation and the other **saving** revelation. It is in view of sustaining revelation, he says, that natural theology may and indeed **must** serve as an introduction to the inner theological problem of the person of Jesus Christ. Moreover, he contends, the Reformers, Calvin and Luther support the idea of such a natural theology.

Firstly, then, there is the **distinction between the formal and the material aspects of the imago Dei.** The material aspect according to Brunner is the *iustitia originalis*, or the positive possibility of man to do what is valid in the sight of God. Sin has, he maintains, destroyed this completely. The 'quid' of the

ø In 1928 Przywara saw in Brunner 'the struggle of the pitiless Reformer (against Liberalism and Rationalism) with the clandestine philosopher who is seeking new avenues to the problems of history and of ethics.' See *Stimmen der Zeit*, Nov. 1928, p.106.



personality and therefore the freedom of man to obey God (the free will) in righteousness have been lost.<sup>1</sup> In spite of this, however, the effect of sin and the Fall has not been so radical that man has ceased to be man, a rational being, who can distinguish between good and evil, who though he cannot obey the will of God can somehow recognise it in his own experience. Though the 'quid' of personality is lost, the 'quod' remains. The **formal imago Dei** consisting of the formal personality, rationality, the power to distinguish between good and evil, in fact, all that is comprehended by the term 'humanum', can never be destroyed by sin and provides the human pre-condition of revelation. Brunner then proceeds to show how this comes to be.

Since man remains a 'person', in a formal sense (an 'unpersonal person'), **he retains in spite of sin the power to be addressed by God in His Word.** Man possesses 'addressability' (Ansprechbarkeit). As a person, he is a subject who can be addressed by God; he has 'subjectness' (Wortfähigkeit). As a person, he is also responsible to God for hearing or rejecting the Word spoken by God; he has responsibility (Verantwortlichkeit). On the basis of human 'subjectness' and 'responsibility' and thus on the foundation of the formal imago Dei, the incarnation became a human reality. In short, God became man, in virtue of something already in man which made human nature capable of receiving the divine impress. This something was the formal image, undestroyed by sin. Such is the doctrine of the formal and material image of God expressed in "Natur und Gnade."<sup>ø</sup>

The Biblical basis for this distinction in the nature of the image as formal and as material,

<sup>ø</sup> pp. 10, 11, 18.

Brunner finds in Galatians 2, 19-20 and 1 Corinthians 2, 10-12. In the Galatian passage, he says, the 'I' who is 'dead to the law' means the 'material' ego, the material substance of the personality, or the 'material imago'. Here Paul is conscious of the law of righteousness which he cannot obey. Similarly the 'I' who is crucified with Christ in verse 20, is the corrupted, material imago, while the 'I' who yet lives in verse 20, is clearly the formal imago, undestroyed and uncorrupted by sin. When Paul said 'Christ liveth in me', he meant that the material imago was restored to him in faith. This does not mean a mystic absorption of man into the being of God. On the contrary it means the personal intercourse of person with person, which could not take place were it not for the formal image.<sup>1</sup>

Again, in expounding 1 Corinthians 2. 10-12, Brunner asserts that Paul was here assuming the power of man formally to receive the Spirit of God (v.12). Man has the power to 'receive' what is 'given' to him by the Spirit. In the apostolic witness to revelation, man's self-identity is never ruled out. In being conformed to God, man does not cease to be himself. It is impossible to say: 'the Holy Spirit believes in me'. But it is possible to say: '**I** believe through the Holy Spirit'. For this reason, the word 'reparatio' is always used in relation to the work of the Holy Spirit, since "nothing can be repaired which is no longer in existence".<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, says Brunner, the doctrine of the formal imago may be regarded as Biblically established.<sup>3</sup>

Having thus distinguished the imago Dei in its two aspects, he then makes a similar distinction

1. Emil Brunner, *Natur und Gnade*, 1935, p. 20.

2. *ibid.*, p. 21.

3. *ibid.*, pp. 20-21 (the Biblical foundations to which Brunner refers).

in relation to the idea of revelation. **Revelation**, he maintains, **is two-fold**. The Bible testifies to a primary revelation of God in His works as well as in the person of Jesus Christ. This primary revelation is the self-impartation of God in creation. The ability of man to know God partially in creation is never denied. This fact has always been acknowledged in the Christian liturgy, an essential part of which is the praise of God by His creation. Paul also evidences to this revelation in Romans 1.20, when he says that all men are inexcusable because they are unable to see **what is so clearly before their eyes**. Calvin also believed in such a revelation, when he said that through creation we know God's 'hands and feet' though not His 'heart.'<sup>1</sup>

The reality of this primary revelation is further supported, says Brunner, by the fact men are responsible creatures and have an awareness of their responsibility. They possess 'conscience', or moral consciousness, which distinguishes them from the lower animals, but relates them to the will or law of God. The relation of man to the law of God makes possible the reality of sin, since the consciousness of the law of God implies the freedom to disobey it.<sup>2</sup>

If then there can be no doubt about the two-fold nature of revelation, continues Brunner, the true question for theology is to discover **how these two kinds of revelation are related**. The plain Biblical answer to this question, he then points out, is that the revelation in Jesus Christ **perfects** the knowledge of God available to man through creation. Creation can provide a knowledge of God's majesty and wisdom but not of His Love.

1. *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.



Sin so blurs man's natural vision that he sees, or imagines he sees, 'idols' instead of God. Even at its highest point, revelation in creation cannot lead to a knowledge of salvation. The highest point of knowledge to which man can attain on the basis of creation is the knowledge of God as a wrathful Judge.<sup>1</sup> In Christ alone can He be seen as a Saviour. In Christ, both revelations find their 'divine basis of reality', a fact which does not destroy their 'duality' and gradation'.<sup>2</sup>

As Brunner proceeds, his interest in the possibilities of man in virtue of the possession of the formal image of God increases in strength. The subject of revelation in creation detaches itself from the thought of revelation in Jesus Christ and becomes a matter of independent interest. He now speaks of a sustaining grace as if it could be discussed in separation from saving grace.

Because of sustaining grace, he says, God does not abolish sin altogether, but remains near the sinful creature who is far from Him. Because of sustaining grace, God prevents the extreme consequences of sin. Through it, the State was instituted to prevent man becoming worse than he is. Sustaining grace covers the entire natural and historical life of man. Every good thing that comes to man in the past and meets him in the present is regarded in faith as a gift not of saving but of sustaining grace. The supreme example of this is seen in the natural order of monogamy. Like the State, this is divinely ordained by God in virtue of His sustaining grace and must be regarded as both necessary and beneficial. Even the fallen sinner 'knows and respects' these orders as 'necessary and somehow holy'. Though their full significance is not known except in and through the knowledge of the

1. ibid., pp. 13-14.

2. ibid., p. 46.

saving grace of Jesus Christ, they are to be understood under the category not of saving, but of sustaining grace. The point of contact in man for the sustaining revelation of God in creation is the formal image of God. <sup>ø</sup>

As a final evidence of the truth of the doctrine both of a two-fold imago Dei and a two-fold revelation, Brunner appeals to the testimony of the Reformers, particularly Calvin.

At this point, he takes full advantage of the research work done by G. Gloede on the natural theology of Calvin. As a result of this, he contends that Calvin believed in two genuine sources by which man could arrive at a knowledge of God. There is revelation through nature interpreted as the world of created things. By means of this, the *lex naturalis* or will of God imprinted on nature is discernible and knowable by the natural man. God desires that He should be known by all men through His works and such knowledge of Him as reaches man in this way attains its highest point of significance in *experientia* or that experience which all may have through God's providential grace. Creation as a source of knowledge of God provides an important supplement to the knowledge of God which comes through faith in the Scriptures, though it can never lead to salvation and never be more than partial. The Scriptures alone provide man with the source of saving knowledge of God ; they alone enable him to see the *lex naturalis* as the law of God, the Creator. This is Calvin's doctrine of revelation according to the judgment of Gloede and Brunner. Similarly Calvin's doctrine of the *imago Dei*

<sup>ø</sup> For the above see 'Natur und Gnade', 1935, pp. 15-18.

is expounded by Brunner in such a way as to favour the doctrine of the formal image of God.

Using the crudely quantitative idea of a 'residue' of the image, left after the Fall and in spite of sin Calvin he says, distinguishes man from the lower creatures and sees man united by a 'lumen naturalis' to the nature of God. In virtue of this 'residue', man remains God's most glorious creation, capable of investigating the divine laws which govern the motions of the stars and of moulding material with a divinely inspired artistry. Though obscured and well-nigh obliterated by sin, the divine likeness to God remains in man, giving to him a sense of responsibility, of religion and of relatedness to God. It is this *imago Dei* left over after the Fall which is the basic presupposition of natural theology and explains the natural goodness of many unregenerate men as well as the vague yearnings after righteousness found even among the heathen. What is possible to man apart from the saving grace of Christ, Calvin termed *iustitia civilis*. But this *iustitia* has definite limits; it can never lead to salvation.

The image of God which is left in man is so corrupted by sin that it cannot lead man to the right kind of religion or to a true and reliable knowledge of God. In order to obtain this, the image of God must be restored by Christ. The Scriptural revelation of God in Christ is therefore necessary because Christ is able to take the incomplete and continually corrupted knowledge of God which comes from subjective nature and to purify it by supernatural grace, so that it becomes the true knowledge of God in His works.

On the basis of these considerations, Brunner then argues that the idea of the *formal imago* existed in embryonic form in Calvin's conception of a 'residue' of the image left after the Fall, while he also maintains that the regenerative work of Christ to which Calvin refers, applies in actuality not to a *completely* restored image,



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On the basis of these considerations, Brunner then argues that the idea of the **formal imago** existed in embryonic form in Calvin's conception of a '**residue**' of the image left after the Fall, while he also maintains that the regenerative work of Christ to which Calvin refers, applies in actuality not to a **completely** restored image,

but only to the **material** image lost through sin. In this way, he has sought in "Natur und Gnade" to bring to life again the natural theology to which Barth is so strongly opposed<sup>ø</sup>. In essaying this task, he believes that he is in strict conformity with Reformed principles. As he has said: "Without the ability in man to be addressed, that is, without the formal point of contact, man could not hear the Word of God. It is evident that through such a doctrine of the point of contact, the doctrine of sola gratia is not in the least endangered."<sup>1</sup>.

What then is Brunner's chief argument against the theology of Barth and secondly, wherein lies the fallacy in his doctrine of revelation and the imago Dei? These two questions will be dealt with in the last two Chapters of this Part.

ø For the above exposition of Calvin's natural theology, see "Natur und Gnade". 1935, 22-36.

1. *ibid.*, p. 19.

CHAPTER 4. Brunner's Criticism of Barth.

According to Brunner, Barth entirely fails to grasp the true nature of the distinction between Reformed and Catholic theology, by saying that the distinguishing feature of Reformed theology is its **negation** of all natural theology. On the contrary, argues Brunner, the real ground of difference between the two lies in their respective doctrines of the **imago Dei**.

Catholic doctrine specifically states that sin only destroys the *dona superaddita*, the original or perfect *iustitia*. This statement paves the way to the idea of an 'unbroken', self-contained system of natural reason. Thus it is assumed that both a rational and an ethical natural theology have an independent right to exist in complete separation from the authority of the Scriptures as the source of the revelation in Jesus Christ. The underlying axiom of Catholic thought is that nature in its subjective and objective aspects is fully accessible to human reason, but that in order to become related to what is supernatural, faith is required. Thus the supreme characteristic of its doctrine is the existence of two separate systems of thought one based on natural revelation and the other based on revealed revelation; **nature and grace are conceived as two independent and unrelated spheres of revelation.**

As distinct from this, says Brunner, Reformed theology asserts that the effects of sin are far more radical and must be seen in the disturbance of nature not only in the subjective sense but also in the objective sense. At the same time, even the Reformers admit that the will of God can somehow be discerned in human nature and in nature external to man. In a formal, though not in a material sense, man is related to God through the image of God. On this assumption, human reason can attain to a real



knowledge of God, though not a knowledge of God's saving grace. Thus in the Reformed conception, **faith and reason, grace and nature are not conceived as in Catholic theology to represent two separate and unrelated spheres, but are to be regarded as distinct from and supplementary to one another.**ø

On the ground that this and no other constitutes the true difference between Reformed and Catholic theology, Brunner concludes that Barth is unreformed in standpoint. His argument may be analysed and summarised in the following form.

1. Reformed theology according to its type places faith as an authority above reason in respect of revelation. Though reason is capable in itself of reaching a knowledge of God in nature, that knowledge is never adequate or perfect and must be submitted to the judgment of faith for correction and perfection.

2. Rationalism as illustrated in the Aufklärung displaces faith from the seat of authority and makes grace bow before nature, by asserting that revelation however considered is open to human reason for discovery and analysis.

3. Between rationalism and Reformed theology stands Catholic theology which assigns to faith and reason two separate provinces or spheres of functioning. Thus in Catholic thought nature and grace never confront each other as rival authorities. The question of authority never causes any concern.

4. Lastly there is the theology of Barth. This goes directly counter to rationalism by denying to human reason any power at all to know God through nature. It

ø For the above, see "Natur und Gnade" pp. 32-36.

also contradicts the Catholic position by denying to reason and nature a capacity for revelation apart from faith and grace and in the third place it stands opposed to Reformed theology because it **completely denies to nature the power to reveal God**. In fact, adds Brunner, Barth has shown that he has not grasped the decisive problem of theology by denying all natural theology. In this way, it may be seen that it is Brunner who issues the last challenge to the effort of theological research to arrive at a true understanding of the relation between the Word of God and the imago Dei apart from natural theology. The final Chapter of this Part will therefore be concerned with showing how this challenge may, like that of Przywara and the theocentricists, be met and answered.

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CHAPTER 5. A Criticism of Brunner's natural Theology.

The question which must be answered in this Chapter is the crucial question of modern Reformed theology for it concerns the relation of revelation to man, the authority of the Scriptures in Church and theology, and the direction in which theology is to be influenced by the testimony of the Reformers themselves. This may clearly be seen by reading Barth's reply to Brunner's natural theology in "Nein!" published in the pages of the theological magazine 'Theologische Existenz heute' in 1934. In this vigorous article, **the thought which has dominated the work of this research appeared in emphatic and almost rhetorical form; Barth maintained that there was no place for natural theology in the theological understanding of revelation and the imago Dei.**

It is proposed in this Chapter to follow the main outline of Barth's criticism of Brunner, dealing first of all with the Reformed conception of the revelation, then with the Biblical passages considered by Brunner to support the idea of a formal image of God, and concluding with a discussion of what is or is not possible to man on the basis of creation. The object of the first three Parts of this thesis will then be completed in the criticism of natural theology and the way will be open for the more positive and constructive statement of the doctrine of the imago Dei.

In relation to the **Reformed** conception of revelation, there can be little doubt that Karl Barth rather than Emil Brunner and his pupil Gloede gives the true interpretation of what the Reformers intended by man's natural knowledge of God. As Barth says: "For Calvin, knowledge of God the Creator only exists in faith in God's Word of revelation. **In this fact the negation of all natural theology is sealed.**"<sup>1</sup>. Barth points out that the

1. Karl Barth, Nein! Antwort an Emil Brunner, Theologische Existenz heute, 1934, p. 42.



**inability** of natural man for revelation was one of the chief tenets of the Reformers' theology and certainly would have been made still more definite had it been realised that Augustine would be hailed as a champion of Roman Catholic doctrine. Although Calvin admits the theoretical possibility of a genuine knowledge of God in creation, he never thinks of or admits its actuality, **because he believed in the Fall of man from original righteousness: si integer stetisset Adam.**<sup>1.</sup>

In his interpretation of the Reformer's doctrine Barth is not alone for just as Gloede supports Brunner, so Peter Barth gives him full and satisfying support. When Calvin was speaking of a natural knowledge of God, says Peter Barth, he was undoubtedly equating it with ignorance. For example, in speaking of philosophers, the Reformer said: "The Lord has bestowed upon them some slight perception of His divinity (*exiguum divinitatis suae gustum*), that they might not plead ignorance as an excuse for their unrighteousness and has at all times instigated them to deliver some truths the confession of which should be their own condemnation."<sup>2.</sup>

According to Peter Barth, Calvin was no 'naive intellectualistic Biblicist', nor was he a philosophical 'dilettante'; he sought to expound the Scriptures.<sup>3.</sup> On the basis of the Biblical testimony, the Reformer maintained that the possibility of natural man for revelation realised itself in praxi in the profane worship of idols. He had no intention, as Brunner maintains, of positing a source of revelation alongside of and complementary to the Holy Scriptures.

1. *ibid.*, p. 42.

2. *Institutes of Calvin*, II 2.18.

3. Peter Barth, *Das Problem der Natürlichen Theologie bei Calvin*, *Theologische Existenz heute*, 1935, p. 11.

Peter Barth makes it clear that when Calvin spoke of certain traces of the *imago Dei* left in the nature of man **after the Fall**, he did so as one who is related to the new birth, and therefore as one participating in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit through whose work the image of God is restored and through whom the image will one day be gloriously perfected.<sup>1</sup> It is faith that enables Calvin to acknowledge and not to despise the evidences of divine likeness in man, in the glimpses of truth which shine amidst the prevailing darkness of human sin.<sup>2</sup> To despise such God-loaned gifts even in unregenerate man would, he said, be nothing less than to despise the Holy Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In the manifold state of such gifts 'we behold some remaining signs of the divine similitude, which distinguishes the entire human race from the other creatures.'<sup>4</sup> At the same time, he maintained: "**Since the image of God is destroyed in us through the fall of Adam, the nature of it can only be judged from its restoration.** Paul says that we should be transformed into the image of God through the Gospel. And according to him the spiritual re-birth is nothing else than the restoration of the image of God."<sup>5</sup>

Calvin is quite emphatic on the point. In matters of spiritual insight concerning the knowledge of God and in particular the knowledge of God's paternal goodness, 'the most ingenious men' prove themselves to be 'blinder than moles'.<sup>6</sup> "Relative to the knowledge of God, the sagacity of the human spirit resembles complete darkness."<sup>7</sup> **There are therefore no grounds for Brunner's assumption that Calvin supports the idea of a 'true natural theology.'** While the Reformer confesses as a believer that certain traces of the image of God remain in human nature in spite of sin he adds that these are so disfigured and distorted by sin that it may as well be said: the image is destroyed.<sup>8</sup>

1. *ibid.*, p. 36.

2 & 3. *ibid.*, p. 34.

4. *ibid.*, p. 35 (Inst. II 2, 17; III, 24-26). <sup>360</sup>

5. *ibid.*, p. 30 (Comm. to Genesis 1.26 CR, 23.26).

6. *ibid.*, p. 35 (Inst. II 2. 18).

7. *ibid.*, p. 35 (Inst. II 2.19).

8. *ibid.*, p. 36 (Comm. on Gen. 1.26).

There is no reason for believing that the Reformers favoured or supported the conception of a 'true' natural theology. With Paul, they maintained that 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.' (Rom.3.23). According to them, Adam and all men in Adam had fallen without an exception; the natural knowledge of God invariably savoured of the 'extravagant imagination!'<sup>1</sup>. On this point Luther was as sound as Calvin. Human reason, he said, "gibt den namen und gottliche ehre und heysset Got, was sie dunckt das Got sey und trifft also nymer mehr den rechten Gott, sondern allewege den teuffel odder yhr eygen dunckel, den der teuffel regirt."<sup>2</sup>. Similarly conscience provides no basis for the knowledge of God since without the Word of God, says Luther "das Gewissen...gleicht einem Spielball, der auf Erden umgetrieben wird und nicht ruhen kann."<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, in order to sum up the Reformed idea of revelation, it may be stated that while the old Protestant orthodoxy may have constructed a doctrine of the two-fold nature of revelation as general and special, after the manner suggested by Brunner and Gloede, there is **in reality no basis in the works of the Reformers themselves for constructing such a doctrine, nor for believing that they regarded natural theology as introductory or supplementary to theology as it is especially directed to the understanding of the Scriptural witness to Jesus Christ.** In conformity with the Scriptures, the Reformers believed that true knowledge of God did not begin until it was imparted through the Spirit of God and through God's Spirit only by hearing and obeying the Word of God spoken in Jesus Christ. To them, the revelation of God in creation could not establish any theological statements regarding man or God.

1. Calvin's Institutes, II, 2,18.

2. quoted by Edmund Schlögl in "Der Mensch in Der Verkündigung Der Kirche, 1936. p.149.

3. ibid., p.160.



When a critical inquiry is made into Biblical statements which are quoted by Brunner in support of his doctrine of natural theology and of a **formal imago Dei as the presupposition of such a theology**, it is found that the Scriptures in these instances and thus in conformity with their uniform testimony are in accordance with the Reformers in rejecting the idea of a genuine source of the knowledge of God in human possibilities.

As Barth maintains, there is 'not a single hint' in the first sixteen verses of 1 Corinthians 2 of a knowledge of God 'prior to and alongside of the revelation of Jesus Christ crucified (v.2)', and existing as the 'presupposition and point of contact' for<sup>1</sup> it. On the contrary, Paul in the verses mentioned by Brunner is contrasting the spirit of this world with the Spirit of God and showing that what is not possible to the natural (psuchikos) man and his wisdom is possible to God in the 'hidden wisdom' of His revelation. The formal personality or self-consciousness of man cannot provide any permanent, human basis for the knowledge of God in His Word. As Paul says (v.14): "...the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: **neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**"<sup>2</sup>.

Similarly, in the case of the passage from Galatians 2, it little avails Brunner to say that Paul in speaking of the new birth in faith does not imply the destruction of man's formal self-identity, since to the apostle that was not the interesting or important thing about faith. To Paul the surprising fact was the **miracle** which had happened to him. He was free, a new creature in Christ his Lord, restored to the likeness of God, and yet he was still and in the very process of revelation was revealed for the first time to be **a sinner** in bondage to

1. Karl Barth, *Nein!*, Theologische Existenz heute, 14, 1934, p.29.

2. This quotation is referred to on the same page of "Nein!"

the law, fallen from grace, without any potentiality for the knowledge of God. The puzzling thing to him was not merely the fact of continuity with Christ in faith **but that the continuity should take place in midst of a life discontinuous with the revelation of God in His Word.**

He was a new creature with new hopes and new aspirations and yet was the old creature, with all the old longings and failings, with all his sin. The revelation of God in Christ had cut across his present existence, lighting up his sinful past, his inheritance of death in Adam, simultaneously with his new life in Christ, his inheritance in the second Adam. Faith was his own decision, yet **not on the basis of anything he was or had done**; God had made it possible, through His reconciling and redeeming grace.

From these considerations, the significance of Barth's criticism of the conception of the new birth expressed in "Natur und Gnade" becomes clear. It will be remembered that Brunner's chief argument for the idea of a formal imago Dei as a point of contact in man for revelation was that "nothing can be repaired which is no longer there."<sup>1</sup> But, as Barth has pointed out, what is said in 2.Cor.5.17 was no mere 'figure of speech'. By 'reparatio', Paul meant new creation, all things new, former things passed away, in short, the miracle of revelation for which man has not even a ' "formal" qualification.'<sup>2</sup>

Thus it may summarily be said that **there are no sound reasons for believing that the Scriptures support the idea of a distinction between the formal and material**

1. Emil Brunner, Natur und Gnade, 1935, p. 21.
2. Karl Barth, Nein! 1934, p. 30.



aspects of the *imago Dei*. The only possible inference which can be drawn from the fact that Brunner should feel obliged to make such a distinction, is that he actually places great reliance upon the capacity of man for God apart from the revelation of God in the Word Jesus Christ.

It is evident that he is interested in a way of approach from man to God and that he believes in the validity and necessity for a philosophical anthropology of man as an introduction to the Bible, Christology, Pneumatics and Church doctrine proper.<sup>1</sup> But now there arises the most critical of all questions asked in this course of this research: can theology ever speak of a knowledge of God in man on the basis of creation, apart from what has happened in the reconciling and redeeming knowledge of God in His Word?

It is contended in these pages that if the knowledge of God in man implies the revelation of God in His Word, there can be only one answer to this question. In striving to know God through the study of human religions and cults or by probing into the secrets of natural uniformities, men can never arrive at the nature of God, nor can a study of history and philosophical anthropology bring them a step nearer to His understanding, for according to the Scriptural testimony there are no human preconditions for revelation. Revelation is God speaking or revealing Himself in His Word to particular men and communicating to these a knowledge of Himself in a world which actively opposes Him and contradicts Him in its sin and creatureliness. Because of this opposition and contradiction, God always speaks, according to the Biblical records, either as a Judge or as a Reconciler, never as Judge and Reconciler. The problem of how God can both judge the sinner and yet reconcile him to Himself is insoluble from a human standpoint and pertains to the mystery of His revelation. This means that revelation is

1. *ibid.*, pp. 20-21.



always **formal** in aspect, though it remains **one in kind**. The implications of this are of profound importance.

Revelation is **one in kind**, because it is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. There are therefore not two revelations, one in creation and one in reconciliation. **By being reconciled to God through Christ we know for the first time that we are created and preserved by God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.** On the basis of reconciliation therefore and on no other basis, the believer knows himself as *one created by God, fallen yet redeemed*. In the revelation of Himself as the Reconciler and Redeemer, God was first revealed as the Creator-Father. In other words, revelation is one in kind, though **it may and does vary in form**.

By saying that revelation varies in form, theology is thereby proclaiming the freedom of God to use whatever medium of expression He may choose. The Bible itself ascribes such freedom to God. Theoretically, it is therefore possible to speak of an extra-biblical revelation.<sup>ø</sup> But if there actually is such a revelation, how shall it be known as such? By what standard, man's or God's? In view of this uncertainty, the inestimable value of the Bible as the record of revelation becomes felt, for clearly it is the recognised, **written form** in which God speaks His Word to the Church and conforms men to His own image. It is true that other books may speak of the love or the sternness of God but it is not always certain whether they mean the same thing as the Biblical witness to the love of God revealed in him who died on the Cross, or the stern justice of the God who made such an act of self-humiliation and condescension even to death and hell, necessary for the reconciliation of man with God.

<sup>ø</sup> Cf. Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Trans. G.T. Thomson, 1936, pp. 190-191.

In emphasising the varied form of revelation, it must not be forgotten that **in content** revelation is always identical. In the Old Testament, the law is the form which God chooses in order to reveal himself in the midst of what contradicts Him; the Gospel is the hidden content of that form, as disclosed in the New Testament. Yet law and Gospel, form and content must combine in order to constitute revelation. Thus at one moment, it is law, judgment, and curse which are known; at another moment, it is grace, mercy and blessing. Only God can grasp the form with the content, the content with the form.<sup>φ</sup> The attempt of man to grasp the form of revelation with the content results in the negative natural theology which Brunner at first upheld in "The Mediator." The attempt, on the other hand, to grasp the content of revelation with the form results in the positive theologia gloriae of which the theology of the analogia entis is such a good example. Both are natural theology and stand opposed to Luther's conception of a theologia **crucis** whose entire emphasis is upon **the power of God to break through and into the creatureliness and sin of the world and to redeem man without ceasing to be GOD'S power.**

It follows as the last, critical conclusion of this thesis that just as revelation cannot be dealt with except as one in its form and content in Jesus Christ, **so also the imago Dei must be regarded as one in form and content in Jesus Christ.** He is the 'image of the invisible God'. (Col.1.15). It is as impossible to speak of a formal image of God **apart** from Jesus Christ as it is to speak of a material image lost in man apart from the power of God to restore to man **through Christ** what has been lost through sin and the Fall. The Fall cannot be understood at all except in relation to the revelation through which grace became known in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The fact that revelation is one in form and content also makes it impossible to speak of degrees of divine likeness in man.

<sup>φ</sup>. The language of God is and remains God's mystery in its ONESIDEDNESS. Cf. K.B. The Word of God Eng. Trans., pp. 198 ff.



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Out of the three critical Parts thus concluded, one clear fact emerges: **if we are to speak of the image of God unambiguously, Biblically, and with the theological support of the Reformers, we must say that the image of God in man was, is, and ever shall be Jesus Christ.** In the very process in which Jesus Christ is revealed to man, the confession of sin, of separation from and discontinuity with God is and must be made. In being conformed to God's image, the true believer ever seeks fresh conformity; in faith he prays for more faith. Like the father of the child in the incident recorded by Mark, he is compelled to cry out with tears, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." ø

PART 4.

## THE THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL SIGNIFICANCE

- of -

THE IMAGO DEI

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CHAPTER 1. An Introduction to this Inquiry.

During the first three Parts of the thesis under consideration, the work of investigation was primarily critical, and secondarily constructive. The problem of the relationship between the Word of God and the imago Dei resolved itself into a critical analysis of three important ways in which natural theology is seeking to establish itself in modern theology. The purpose was thus the necessary one of demonstrating just in what direction or in what manner this attempt has failed. Now that this has been done, the work of research naturally alters its emphasis and becomes primarily **constructive**, and secondarily critical. The task which confronts this Part of the thesis can thus be defined in the following way.

In the first place, the theological background underlying the first three Parts must be brought to light by means of an exposition of the basic theological principles governing the entire research. Arising from this, two Chapters will be devoted to the object of explaining what is meant firstly, by exegesis, and secondly, by the path to knowledge in theology. Then, as the work of doctrinal reconstruction proceeds and develops, the investigation leads to the heart of the subject in an analysis of the relation of faith to the imago Dei. The doctrine of the imago Dei is seen as the concern of **theological** anthropology, implying a specific doctrine of sin. Finally, in Chapter 8, there is discussed that most important consideration, namely, the Biblical basis for the doctrine of the imago Dei.

CHAPTER 2. The Principles of theological Research.

The first principle of theological research is **that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments constitute the solely valid guide to knowledge, because they and they alone record the revelation of God's Word to the Church.**

This of course means that theology is bound to serve no other authority than that which makes itself known through the written word of the canonical Scriptures. Thereby the possibility of differing and even contradictory dogmatic utterances is not excluded, for theology is a human undertaking and the Bible is human testimony. Yet in its human fallibility the Scriptures confront theology as an external magisterial authority, since in and through their testimony, God has promised to speak His Word to the Church. They provide the crib in which Christ is hid, and theology must heed their witness if it is to be a reliable servant of the Church. Thus all dogmatic statements must, if they are truly to represent the doctrine of the imago Dei, be derived from the written, human testimony of Scripture. Only in this way can they be a genuine guide to the proclamation of God's Word.

The second principle essential to research follows logically upon the first and may be worded thus: **the Old Testament is related to the New Testament as prophecy to fulfilment.** This statement has most vital implications.

Throughout the whole of the Old Testament may be traced the red line of prophecy. Jesus Christ was the Messiah promised to the children of Israel. The election and preservation of the 'seed of Abraham' are unintelligible apart from the fact of Him who in the fulness of time appeared, lived, suffered, and was crucified, who on the third day rose again in victory over sin, death and hell, and who by the same power will come again to judge the living and the dead. More particularly



and more fully, the upholding of creation fallen in Adam, the survival of Noah, the call of Abraham out of Ur and Haran, the setting apart of Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, the miraculous Exodus out of Egypt, the reception of the Tables of the Law by Moses in the mystery of the revelation at Mt. Sinai, the weary pilgrimage of the people through the desert, the entry led by Joshua into the promised land, the attempts to form a united kingdom in the time of the Judges and Kings, the establishment of the incomparable reign of David at Jerusalem, and then that unique succession of prophets whose last member was John the Baptist --- these are all without exception historical and recorded testimonies set in the midst of the sphere of fallen creatureliness, pointing in different forms to the coming Messiah-Lord. As a whole, the Old Testament is the sole prophetic witness to Christ. The inferences from this fact, though they are often overlooked, are most instructive.

For example, it necessarily follows that the record of the incarnation, life, temptations, teachings, miracles, sufferings, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as found in the Gospels, cannot be understood or even considered apart from the Old Testament background of Messianic expectation which precedes it. So also in the understanding of the Biblical idea of the *imago Dei* the Old Testament witness is as necessary as the New.

Only on the basis of the *integrality* of the Old Testament and the New, can the writer of the book of Hebrews be understood when he speaks of Christ as a 'Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizidek' (Heb.5,6), or of Abraham as one of those who 'died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.' (Heb.xi,13). Similarly, and upon no other basis, can the image of God be spoken of as being lost in Adam and restored in Christ.

The fact that the Bible as a record of revelation is an integral whole leads to the third principle of research, namely, that revelation **is one and indivisible, because it is God's Word.** This means that when God reveals Himself in the midst of time, it is always God who is being revealed, not aspects, or attributes, or degrees of divinity, but **God Himself in His Word; the Word of God is qualitatively one.** The indivisibility of revelation means that the Word of God cannot **quantitatively be measured.** This principle may well be illustrated.

On the basis that revelation is one and indivisible, it follows that the Old Testament may not be represented as giving testimony to one kind, department, or division of revelation, and the New Testament as bearing record to another. The God who revealed Himself to Abraham, Moses and the Prophets was not a different God from Him who was revealed in Jesus, as though in the first case He were wrath and in the other love. Nor was He a better God. On the contrary, in each case He was the same God, revealing Himself in different forms as Lord of life and over life. In each case, it was God speaking in His Word to man, that is, to a particular individual. The incarnation as an event in time with its origin in eternity revealed the Word of God as Jesus Christ. The day of Pentecost signalled the bestowal of His Spirit to the Church. But as the event known as the transfiguration clearly shows, faith in the risen, exalted Lord was possible before the actual historical resurrection and the Spirit of God which descended at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, had been revealed long before in the lives of men like Abraham. The Word which in Jesus Christ 'became flesh and dwelt among us' was 'in the beginning'. Thus revelation must always be understood as revelation of God the Father, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is always God speaking in the unity and distinction of His triune Being, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Revelation is one and indivisible, because God is one and indivisible.

With revelation in this sense the imago Dei is inextricably bound, for the image has reality only in the

event of God's speaking in His Word. The imago Dei is that conformity of man to God, that unity of correspondence, which takes place when God reveals Himself. By witnessing to the power of God thus to make Himself known to man, the Biblical writers also witness to the possibility of a human correspondence or conformity to God. The absolute freedom of God to reveal Himself, and His positive use of that power in the control and ordering of earthly events, in a manner which defies all analysis and beggars all description, are facts to which the Scriptures give uniform testimony as taking their course through the Word. The image of God has no meaning and no reality as a human event apart from the event of revelation in which God utters His Word. Or - to express the same thought in different terms - the Word of God and the imago Dei exist **contemporaneously** in the event of revelation. Therefore the unity and indivisibility of God in His power to reveal Himself make it necessary that theology should not conceive the Word and the image as separate things, but rather as one reality based on the freedom of God in the event wherein He speaks and is heard. In this way, Paul is able to speak to the Colossians of the mystery of the indwelling Christ.<sup>ø</sup> But this means faith, and as a result suggests the fourth principle of the research which is being undertaken.

According to this principle, **faith is that humanly known, decided, felt and experienced event in which God in the exercise of His sovereign freedom speaks His Word to certain individuals and conforms them to Himself.**

In this principle it will be noted that faith is

<sup>ø</sup>. See Col.1.27. Christ is here the Word and the image.



defined paradoxically. It cannot be defined otherwise, for it involves the freedom of man and the freedom of God, the reconciliation of two irreconcilables. Yet such is faith, the miracle of birth from above, the bringing to life of that which was dead. Both in the case of the analogia entis and the doctrine of theocentricism, the attempt is made to destroy the miraculous, contradictory character of faith by endeavouring to assume a higher synthesis or freedom in which the contradiction vanishes. But faith in which there is no contradiction, is simply not faith at all. The image of God cannot be separated or considered in isolation from that experience in which by a miracle, man's freedom and God's correspond. That experience is faith. The sole sphere in which faith appears is the Church. Thus the fifth and last principle of theological research may be enunciated.

The Church as the community of them that confess Christ as their Lord, Reconciler, and Redeemer, is the sphere in which God the Father speaks His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, so that men hear and are conformed to Him (extra ecclesia<sup>m</sup> nulla salus).

The true Church, in Paul's words, is 'the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ'. (Ephes.3.9). Thus the Church, like the Word, is Scripturally conceived as being 'in the beginning.' It belongs to the eternal purpose of God. It is the new creation but new, only on the basis of the old, as the telos or goal of the covenant-law made with the chosen people. It is the 'Israel of God', the sphere in which the Word of God is proclaimed to Jew and to Gentile alike, to all, in fact, who hear and obey it. As historically recorded, the Church came into being in clear visibility on the Day of Pentecost at Jerusalem, where the Spirit descended upon them that waited there. But it had its being at that time and at that place only through the Word which was spoken in conclusiveness in the Cross and in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is thus the Word of God

Jesus Christ, who determines the existence of the Church, **or its non-existence**. When God speaks, and men hear the Word, the Church actually does come into existence. This may happen, though not necessarily, in the spoken word of human proclamation, or in the visible proclamation through bread and wine, the symbols of the sacrament. Real proclamation occurs only where God is speaking through the fallible words of human testimony. In such proclamation the Church really exists as a concrete human reality. Within the Church alone are men actually conformed to the image of God through becoming members of the body of Christ.

In view of what has been said, it may be readily recognised that an account of the basis postulates of theological research of the kind undertaken in these pages, may not be in any wise complete without such a reference to the Church.

CHAPTER 3. The Meaning of Exegesis in Theology.

A consideration of the basic principles of theological research immediately raises the question of the relationship of the Scriptures to theology, or the question of exegesis. Obviously, theology must be exegetical, if it is to be authoritative for Church proclamation. In the *Institutio religionis christianae*, for instance, passages or verses from the Bible are not only quoted, but also interpreted or expounded. Even when no specific reference in the form of a text is given, the atmosphere which Calvin conveys to the reader is intensely Biblical, more Biblical, in fact, than would have been the case, had his writings been a mere conglomeration of texts. But what is meant by Biblical exegesis? This question must be answered, if the doctrine of the *imago Dei* is to be expounded and from the outset certain conceptions of 'exegesis' must be refuted.

First among these misconceptions is the view that the task of the exegete consists in lifting out of the Scriptures, dogmas or doctrines already formed and waiting to be lifted therefrom. The theologian is thus confronted with a mass of Scriptural material to be combined, summarised and systematised. The Bible is regarded as a depository of doctrines. Both Melancthon and Heiden held this view of exegesis and along with them go all who hold the mechanical or automatic conception of verbal inspiration.

The fallacy in such a conception is that it denies to the exegete all except a dictated or mechanical task. Moreover, the idea that God can only speak to the Church in the form of certain predetermined, doctrinal propositions is absurd. The Word of God is a living Word and will not submit to such limitation. Furthermore the practical outcome of such a view is that preaching becomes arbitrary, and most confusing. In the last resort, the preacher has to institute himself judge over what is doctrinally and Scripturally sound and to repeat again and again the texts which his own exegesis has exposed as doctrine. There arises the phenomenon of Biblical orthodoxy, in which the



paradoxically, Scripture ceases to be a true norm. Consequently the idea of exegesis which underlies it must be rejected.

The second great falsehood which compromises and destroys the meaning and value of exegesis in theology arises from a misunderstanding of the authority of the Church. According to this, the authority of the Scriptures as norm of theology and of proclamation in its two-fold form of preaching and sacraments, does not lie outside the Church, **but is within it as a living, historical, and traditional fact.** In this way, the visible Church founded upon a supposed **material** succession of bishops, sanctioned once and for all by the establishment of Peter as the foundation of the Church, actually possesses the power in itself to determine what is and what is not true or revealed doctrine. This idea of the Church is mentioned by Luther in his Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, when in expounding the fourth verse of the first Chapter he wrote: "In like manner say I of myself, that before I was lightened by the knowledge of the Gospel, I was as zealous for the papistical laws and traditions of the fathers, as ever any was, most earnestly maintaining and defending them as holy and necessary to salvation."<sup>1</sup> Thus the free normative power of the Scriptures is absorbed by the authority of the Church, which can then expound the word in such a way that its own tradition is untouched and unquestioned.

Only two things need be said in relation to this misconception. The first is that the Scriptures provide no grounds for believing in a **material apostolic succession but only in the spiritual succession of believers.** This does not minimise the value and place of Peter, as the chief of the apostles and as the Spirit-filled preacher of the Day of Pentecost. On the contrary, it establishes him as the rock on which Christ built and will continue to build His Church. The Bible remains the norm which actively challenges the existence of the Church.

1. Martin Luther, Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, a new edition revised and corrected by Rev. Erasmus Middleton, 1930, p.60.

Therefore exegesis in theology cannot and must not become the instrument of dictatorial imposition used by the Church in the formation of its doctrines. That is the second objection to the Catholic views.

A third and more subtle form of fallacy regarding the relation of exegesis to theology arises from a misunderstanding of the authority of theology. Here the theologian either intentionally or unintentionally adopts his own subjective criterion of the nature of revealed truth, objectifies it, and then adapts the testimony of Scripture to it, until he reaches or believes that he reaches complete conformity. This is precisely what occurred in the case of Schleiermacher. He adopted as the working principle of his theology the idea that religion, and especially the highest form of it, namely, Christianity, were resolvable into a feeling of absolute dependence. Starting from the religious experience of the pious believer, he sought to extract doctrines, by way of introspection. Thus the authority of the Scriptures was lost in the thought of the authority of the religious consciousness.

In replying to this fallacy, it is essential to admit that through exegesis the Biblical canon is continually being **incorporated in the life of the Church and thus in the religious experiences of believers**. Continually as the Bible is understood and interpreted afresh, it is being embodied in the spiritual and oral tradition of the Church. But never does this oral tradition either in writing or in experience become normative in the sense in which Scriptures are normative. Never can it become, as it was with Schleiermacher, a subject of independent inquiry, upon which can be raised an impregnable system of theological doctrine. The terminus a quo for exegesis remains the Scriptures. Its task in theology is to guide the testimony of the prophets and the apostles into a fruitful source of proclamation. It thus fulfils its object in reaching the consciousness of man. It cannot start from that point. Exegesis means the exposition of **God's Word** not **man's**.

It may be seen from a critical analysis of the three

misconceptions above outlined, that once the canonical value of the Scriptures is forgotten, neglected or over-ruled, there is raised another authority in the form of orthodoxy, the Church, or the religious consciousness. In each case, exegesis ceases to be true **Biblical** exegesis, but is merely the instrument or servant of this other authority. In order to counteract this, theology as the guide to proclamation must acknowledge the fact that it receives whatever validity it may have, from the Bible. In this way, it will become genuinely exegetical. Through exegesis, which is free and unlimited by the possible dictatorship of man, the word of the written testimony of Scriptures may be spoken to the Church, and may indeed become the actual Word of God to man.



CHAPTER 4. The Theological Path to Knowledge.

In this chapter, it is not proposed to say anything different from what has already been said. The object is merely to underline the significant fact in the previous chapter, in order to lead the investigation to the central theme of the *imago Dei*. At this particular point, therefore, it is desired to emphasise the fact that the path of knowledge in theology must begin with the Bible and be exegetical if it is to be fruitful. This must be done, if it is only to expose the fallacy of theological empiricism.

Theological empiricism is wider than anything originating in the school of Schleiermacher though it embraces the thoughts of that school of thought. It may be seen in English theology as influenced by men like John Locke and represents a pragmatic outlook of the kind common to William James and to American and British thinkers generally. Empiricists in theology are continually guided and inspired by the assumption that doctrines are the result of accumulated and selected experience. Ultimately, experience is the standard of criterion of religious truth. Accordingly, it is argued that whatever authority is possessed by the Bible in theology and in the Church is derived from the fact that the Bible is not as much a record of revelation, as a record of religious experience which continuously develops, expands and deepens till it reaches its perfect expression in the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. This appears very straightforward and clear until the question is raised : what is the nature of religious experience ? Then the ambiguity of theological empiricism becomes evident. The very width of the approach to knowledge by way of experience affords an admirable opportunity for unlimited individualism.

For instance, Schleiermacher considered experience as a fact predominantly aesthetic. Kant and Ritschl, however, were impressed chiefly by the moral aspect of religious life. Hegel thought of experience as valid and true only in its rationality, while Lotze and Herrmann were concerned more especially with the practical value of human life. In this way, theological systems

have been raised on the basis of some one aspect or aspects of experience, with widely varying signification for the doctrine of the imago Dei. In every instance, varying with the view of religious experience taken, a religious empiricist has claimed the power to judge over the Scriptures, with the result that Church proclamation would appear to be compelled to conform itself to his arbitrary criterion of values, rather than to the Scriptures, for its validity. It is for this reason that the theology of Barth is so strongly opposed to religious or theological empiricism. For this reason, it stresses the fact that the theological pathway to knowledge proceeds from God to man via the Holy Scriptures, that the most important thing in a sermon is not the opinion or experience of the preacher but the text, and that in the last resort it is not experience which determines the truth of theological statements, but the **revelation of God's Word**. It must follow that any statements which may be made concerning the image of God, in the course of this thesis, are made on the assumption that knowledge in theology comes, if at all, not from the dictated direction of man to God, but from the **wholly problematic direction of God to man**.

CHAPTER 5. Faith and the Imago Dei.

Having defined the basic principles of this research and at the same time indicated the nature of the exegetical path to knowledge, the investigator is now free to deal with the problem which lies most central in position to the subject of the image of God, namely, the problem of what is possible to man in faith. Already it has been stated that the Word of God and the image of God are inseparably connected and that this fact implies the real possibility of faith as a human decision, felt and experienced. The relation of faith to the imago Dei must now be given special consideration and this may be given theological expression in the following terms: **In the act or event of faith, a real conformity to the Word of God takes place.**

Every word in this statement is carefully chosen. For example, there is the phrase 'conformity to God's Word'. The phrase 'conformity to God' was avoided, because it has such a vague and indefinite meaning in common theological parlance. Like the phrase 'sovereignty of God' it lends itself to boundless misconceptions. In the course of the centuries since the Reformation, conformity to God has come to mean conformity to a Being quite distinct from Him who became incarnate in the Word. It has been identified with conformity to traditional piety, as in the time of the pietists, to the spirit of nature as in the nineteenth century, to a system of simple endless Being, remote from the idea of God's active participation in history, as in the case of the deists, to the abstract and nebulous principles of truth, beauty, and goodness, as in the school of modern idealism, or finally and blatantly to man himself in his inherent power to achieve greatness, as in the modern German theologies of the State with their roots in Nietzsche. Indeed, it may be stated without hesitation that the significance of this phrase has varied in precisely the same manner and with precisely the same results as the phrase 'sovereignty of God'. Just as an emphasis upon the divine



sovereignty has often proved a subtle pretext for the assertion of human sovereignty, so by a similar process of self-deception, an emphasis upon 'conformity to God' has often come to imply conformity to man. This idea was suggested by recent statements made by Professor Karl Barth in the 'Theologische Studien.'

"Man braucht heute nicht mehr mit allzu vielen Leuten <sup>darüber zu</sup> streiten, dass in der Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie der Neuzeit ein sehr tiefsitzender Fehler eine verhängnisvolle Rolle gespielt hat, den wir in Zukunft tunlichst vermeiden sollten. Wo steckt dieser Fehler? Man hat oft gesagt, er bestehe darin, dass man im Lauf der Jahrhunderte seit der Reformation die Erkenntnis der Souveränität Gottes verloren habe. Eben diese Diagnose ist aber doch nur dann richtig, wenn man sie des Näheren dahin interpretiert: es ist die Souveränität des des WORTES Gottes, deren Erkenntnis wir weithin verloren haben und wieder zu gewinnen versuchen müssen. .... Immer konnte dann unter der Souveränität Gottes eben sowohl die Souveränität des Geistes als die der Natur, die Souveränität eines phantastischen Guten oder Wahren, die Souveränität der Macht an sich oder schliesslich ganz einfach: die Souveränität des Menschen selber verstanden werden."<sup>1</sup>

Barth proceeds to shew how the sovereignty of God's Word defines and limits its meaning by reference to the incarnation. The Word of God is Jesus Christ and there is no sovereignty of God apart from Him. Thus the sovereignty of God is defined in its omnipotence, exclusiveness and freedom in Him alone. Barth then explains the precise meaning of the qualities of divine sovereignty. This, as will now be seen, at once leads to a clarification of the problem of faith and the imago.

1. Karl Barth, Die Souveränität des Wortes Gottes und die Entscheidung des Glaubens, Theologische Studien Heft 5, 1939, pp.5,6.

Characteristic of the sovereignty of God in His Word, declares Barth, is its **omnipotence**. This is not just the abstract form of infinite power, but the power of God in the action of His love, wherein He creates, sustains and rules all things. This and no other is the power of Jesus Christ, and as His power, the power of the **Holy Scripture**, the power of the **sermon**, and the **sacraments**. No other power can challenge or override that power. Nature and history must bow before it. The power of the State is subordinated to and derived from it, for such is the omnipotence of God in His sovereign Word.

The second quality of the sovereignty of God's Word, says Barth, is its **exclusiveness**. This means that there is only one Mediator between God and man, for there is but one Word. It is in their witness to this one Word, one Mediator, that the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments **stand alone** in opposition to the testimonies of all other revelations. Thus the Church is **peculiar to itself** in its message and sacraments amongst all the religions, world philosophies, myths and ideologies. There is no rival, no competitor to the Word of God; **it is sovereign in its exclusiveness**.

In the third place, as Barth explains, the sovereignty of God's Word is seen in its **freedom**. The freedom of Jesus Christ is seen, however, not in the form of an imposition or dictation by a merciless Fate, but in the priority and superiority of divine freedom, through which alone our freedom ceases to be a dream and becomes actual. It is precisely through the freedom of Jesus Christ and by His unmerited grace that men are revealed for the first time to be in a bondage of disgrace. Thus the true **humanum** appears for the first time in the exercise of the sovereign freedom of God's Word; man is conformed to the image of God. Jesus Christ is free to be either our **Judge** or our Saviour. As the one Word of God, He is free in the witness of the prophets and the apostles, as also in the proclamation of the Church, to loose or bind, to blind or illumine, to condemn or to justify. Freedom is thus the third aspect of His sovereignty. Freedom to be an apostle, freedom to serve the

Word in the Church, there is none apart from the freedom of God's Word.

It is only necessary to quote a few instances from the Scriptures in order to perceive the strength and meaning of Barth's theological utterances on the sovereignty of the Word of God.

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"<sup>1</sup> says Paul to the Corinthian Christians and then adds: "Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for **necessity** is laid upon me; yea, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."<sup>2</sup>

Paul did not dare to abuse the free power of the Word in the gospel. Theology must learn the same lesson. "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God," said the same apostle to Timothy.<sup>3</sup> He meant that the Word of God is a **living** Word. Is it not to say the same thing, when it is declared that the Word of God in its freedom in and **over** the Scriptures cannot be imprisoned in the cast-iron crucibles of the categories of an Aquinas or an Augustine, cannot be dictated to, cannot be obstructed in the free power of its divine yet human utterance? "Beyond any other book," said Coleridge, "the Bible finds me." John Keble is also conscious of the freedom of God in His Word, as he writes :

"Eye of God's Word! where'er we turn,  
Ever upon us! thy keen gaze  
Can all the depths of sin discern,  
Unravel every bosom's maze:"

1. 1.Cor.9.1.  
2. 1.Cor.9.vv.16-19.  
3. 2.Tim.3.16.



"Who that has felt thy glance of dread

Thrill through his heart's remotest cells

About his path, about his bed,

Can doubt what Spirit in thee dwells"<sup>1</sup>

It follows as a logical consequence that when theology speaks of the conformity of man to God which takes place in faith, conformity to God's Word in the three qualities of its sovereignty is and must be intended. Such conformity could not take place, or exist as a human possibility apart from the unlimited power of God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Controller of all things. To believe is to become a **new creature**. In the same way, only one Person can mediate this conformity to man. To believe is to believe through **Jesus Christ alone or exclusively**. Likewise the actuality of such a conformity is wholly dependent upon the freedom of God in His Word to give or to withhold it. To believe is to believe through the **free enabling** grace of Jesus Christ. That is why it was said at the beginning of this Chapter that the phrase 'conformity to God's Word' was carefully chosen.

In the second place and in the same statement, faith was called an **event or an act**. It is of great importance to the subject of the imago Dei that faith should be so-called, for it is by no means obvious to many thinkers that faith **is** an event or an act. As it has already been suggested, faith has been defined in terms of religious experience, whether aesthetic, rational, or moral. It has also been defined as a permanent attitude of soul to God or to life. It has even been defined as the acceptance without question of a group of credal utterances.

According to Barth, all these ways of defining faith are defective because they assume that faith is or can become a possession of man as man. He does not deny that faith is a real experience, that it has certain aesthetic, intellectual,

1. Quoted in Paxton Hood's 'Christmas Evans', 1881, Hodder & Stoughton, p.274.

and moral accompaniments, that it involves a certain attitude to God and to life, and even that it inevitably involves the acceptance of a credo. What he is concerned to point out, however, is that not one of these characteristics of faith, nor their combination, constitutes the essential nature of faith. According to the Scriptures, faith is an event, **not a state of being.** It is an event which has its being **only in the process of becoming.** It is real as a human act **only at the precise moment when God chooses to speak His Word, or to reveal Himself in the Church.** In other words, faith as a human decision or act is made possible only in virtue of the divine decision or act in which God actually speaks and man (not in general, but in particular) hears. Thus in the event of revelation faith has historical factuality. There is none who gives more regard to the historicity of revelation and to the actual occurrence of faith in human experience than Barth.

"In the Bible," he says, "revelation is always a happening between God and certain men. Here one is separated out and led into a far country like Abraham, there one is called and anointed to be a prophet, another a priest, another a king, here a whole nation is chosen, led, ruled, blessed, disciplined, rejected and taken up again, there faith and obedience are aroused, or else hearts are completely hardened. Here in the light of this whole occurrence a Church is gathered together, preaching and sacrament are introduced as signs of recollection and expectation, because now "in Christ", man has acquired a future and along with that a present between the times."<sup>1</sup>

As Professor G.T. Thomson, the translator, explains, 'a present between the times' means a present between the past and the future. Faith is both retrospective and prospective in viewpoint. It looks back to revelation which has already taken place and on the basis of that, looks forward to

1. Karl Barth, The Doctrine of the Word of God, Pro 1.Vol.1. Part 1, Eng.Trans.,p.342.

revelation which is to come. The actual existence of faith is neither in the past nor in the future, but is held between the two by the power of God as He speaks His Word to the particular individual who hears and obeys, in the living present. It is God alone who makes faith possible as a human and historically realised event in time. Clearly then it must follow that faith, though it exists in time in the moment of revelation, is essentially other than time. A brief analysis of Isaiah 25 will sufficiently illustrate these points.

In the articulation of his vision, the prophet is compelled to oscillate between the past and the future. At one moment he is reflecting upon the wonderful things done by God in the past. "Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth," he says. Then inspired by this review of past revelation, he looks forward to the days when his people will be a strong people glorifying in God, when on the other hand the 'city of the terrible nations' will be afraid. In the next verse his vision is once more retrospective. "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm." But then, immediately following, he is once more concerned with future revelation, with the destruction of the veil that is spread over all the nations, with the engulfing of death in victory, the removal of sorrow, and the final eradication of the rebuke which all the faithful are bound to suffer in a world both creaturely and fallen.

Not only does faith in this vision appear as a 'present between the times,' but it is also seen as a present which is not **of time**. This thought is conserved in the idea of a past and a future revelation, which is **light and redemption** to them who see and obey, but which is **darkness and destruction** to them who do not see and fail to obey. Thus whether faith is concerned with the past or the future, it is concerned with something **final and unquestionable**, with a past which God has determined in spite of opposing factors, and with a future whose



outcome depends upon Him and Him alone. What Barth says on the subject of 'contingent contemporaneousness' in relation to revelation is relevant to this subject, since it bears out what has already been said of the nature of faith in this Chapter and gives a clear evidence to the way in which the relation of faith to the imago Dei should be understood.

Barth distinguishes three **times of revelation**. The first is the time of original utterance in Jesus Christ. The second is the time of testimony to this original utterance, when the Church received its canon of Scripture. The third time is the time of the Church itself, when the Word of God is mediated to men by the proclamation which is derived from the testimony received.<sup>1</sup>

He points out the danger of abandoning this distinction. To do so is to abandon the distinction between faith and history. For example, if the distinction between the time of revelation to the apostles and the time of revelation to the Church is overlooked or destroyed, it could be argued that the Church today is in a position not only to interpret the Scriptures but to **make** them. In that case the Church would cease to have a problematic existence, contingent upon her right proclamation of God's Word through the canonical Scriptures, but would itself become the lord of the Book and the sole interpreter of history. On the other hand, if this distinction is observed and adhered to, the Scriptures are seen to be their own best interpreter; the Church is seen to be completely dependent upon the written testimony of the prophets and apostles to revelation for the proclaimed word; while the Scriptures for their part are seen to depend for their truth as testimony upon the original, direct utterance of God in His Word, Jesus Christ.

If revelation be understood in this threefold sense, it will be understood that faith in its dependence upon the word proclaimed in the Church, ultimately though **indirectly**

1. *ibid.*, pp.164-170.

rests upon the original utterance of God in His Word for its experienced actuality as an historical event in the lives of men. This means, therefore, that in its essential nature it is not grounded in the flux of history, but in the sovereign freedom of God's Word. It is with faith as an event in this sense, that the theme of man's conformity to God's Word in revelation must be inseparably linked.

CHAPTER 6. The Imago Dei, as a subject of theological Anthropology.

An obvious observation which can be made after reading the foregoing Chapter is that an analysis of the relation of faith to the imago Dei would appear to be impossible without a full inquiry into the nature of God's Word. That is precisely what is implied in the title of this Chapter, for it must follow that if the doctrine of the imago Dei concerns man only as he is related to or determined by God in the event of revelation, then this doctrine can only be dealt with as a subject of **theological** anthropology. As it has already been seen, natural theology stands in direct opposition to such an inference.

Since the time of Schleiermacher in the nineteenth century, the doctrine of the imago Dei has provided students with an apparently unrivalled opportunity for a general inquiry into human possibilities of knowing God unhampered by Scriptural restrictions. Again and again the search for knowledge has begun with man in general, man the moral agent, man the object of historical criticism, in short, man the educable. Common to all such efforts to understand man as he ought to be, there is the pre-supposition that **man by his own endeavours can bring to full maturity the germ of divine likeness with which he is born.** Conformity to the image of God on this basis comes to mean the process of education whereby a man by action and reaction with his environment can bring into existence out of the unformed material of his inherited nature the kind of character which reflects in greater or less degree the divine perfection.

From the side of pure educational theory, this principle doubtlessly dates back to Rousseau. From the side of pure historical theology, the principle goes back to Pelagius. But in modern theological thought the greatest systematic exponent of the principle is Schleiermacher. The doctrinal implications of the principle are only too apparent.



The doctrine of the *imago Dei* necessarily finds its source in the nature of man, since the perfect man is conceived to exist in embryo in every man, precisely in the same manner as the oak exists potentially in the acorn. Nature is thus never unrelated to grace, nor grace to nature. The sole distinction which Jesus possessed was that he was able to realise to a superlative degree the potential perfection which all possess by nature. The study of Christology leads naturally from the philosophical consideration of the innate human capacities for God. The doctrine of the image of God finds its origin in the sphere of a general philosophical anthropology.

It is the decisive contention of this thesis that no results of any value for the formulation of the doctrine of the *imago* can possibly be obtained upon the basis of such ideas as these. **Such results can only be obtained through understanding Jesus Christ in His unique threefold character, as the Incarnate Word of God, as the sole Intercessor betwixt God and man, and lastly as the Source of all Hope.** As this is what is implied by saying that the doctrine of the *imago Dei* is a subject of **theological** and not general philosophical anthropology, the purpose of this Chapter defines itself as an analysis of this statement. The first consideration will therefore be an interpretation of what is meant by the incarnation. The title may be worded thus :

1. Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God.

What does this mean ? or, rather, what does the incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus Christ imply for the doctrine of the image of God ?

In the first place, it implies an immediate demarcation of the sphere in which theology may legitimately make inquiries into the nature of the image, for obviously the *humanitas Christi* is not something which can be understood as the final fruition of a developing and progressing humanity, historically discernible and open to the general methods of anthropological criticism, but is a **new creation**. The incarnation as recorded in Scripture is the **revelation of God**. It is God **making** history, God bringing into

being, and revealing what through sin could no longer be revealed, **the true humanitas, the imago Dei.** The birth of Jesus was that event, in which through the mystery of revelation the Son of God **was born,** the event, therefore, in which there came into being He whose essence contradicted the form of His appearing. A complete knowledge of the historical circumstances which led to that birth, if such knowledge were available, could not explain the birth itself, for it was **new** birth, or birth from above, an act of inconceivable condescension, in which God spoke **in the flesh.** That is why no other view of the Scriptural record of Mary's 'blessedness' as the mother of Jesus can be held than that which sees in the birth of Jesus an act of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Virgin Birth necessarily stood at the beginning of the life of Jesus while in conformity with the whole mystery of the incarnation there stood at the end of his life the empty Tomb. Both are historical facts recorded in the witness of the New Testament writers, but historical only in the sense of signifying that which was not history, namely, **God in His unique self-revelation in Jesus Christ.**

Such a conception of the incarnation presupposes that the Fall of man, individually and socially, is complete, and that the new beginning which God made in the person of Jesus Christ was as radical as it was unique. The incarnation was not, as it is stated in the doctrine of the analogia entis, merely the result of a supreme intensification of the divine power of grace upon human nature, already in existence and prior to the birth of Christ. On the contrary, it was defined in its uniqueness and conclusiveness by being limited to one person, Jesus Christ. Neither the Fall of man nor the Coming of Christ can be fitted into the framework of a general evolutionary schematism of revelation, without destroying their essential significance.

According to the Scriptures, human nature was originally related to grace. Adam was created in the image of God (Gen.1, 26 Cf.1. Cor. 1.11,7; James 3,9). But it is also recorded that human nature was corrupted by the Fall and that all succeeding generations from Seth onwards were begotten not in God's image but in the sinful likeness of Adam, after his image (Gen. 5.3). Henceforth the efforts of man to become God-like are construed as idolatry, of which the erection of the Tower of Babel is such a splendid example (Gen.11.4). That is why the word 'image' in the majority of cases in the Old and New Testaments has the customary meaning of 'idol'. Again and again, there is mentioned the tendency of the children of Israel to conform God to their own image, or to the image of something which they can see, touch and handle, and which in return cannot judge or question the righteousness or unrighteousness of their actions (Exod.32.1).

In Psalm 106, for instance, there is given a striking picture of the human endeavour to become self-contained and self-sufficient, an endeavour which invariably meets with disaster : always it is God who hears the cry for help, God who remembers the covenant, God who regards the distresses of the people, who delivers them from their foe. In the New Testament, this idol-worship shows itself in the pride of the religious pietist who thanked God that he was 'not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican' (Luke 18,11). It is also seen in the religious fanaticism which gave Jesus over to be crucified. Is it not seen today in the form of absolutism and totalitarianism which seem to threaten the very existence of the Church ? The struggle to which the Bible uniformly testifies is the struggle between the idolatry which sets up man, in his perverted, corrupted and fallen state, as an object of supreme worship, and the true worship of God, which, either afar off as in the case of Abraham, or near at hand, as in the case of the apostles, is manifested in the hearing and obeying of the Word which in Jesus Christ became incarnate.



Thus upon the basis of what has been said, it must be inferred that the true humanitas, the imago Dei in man, cannot have any real significance as a subject of theological anthropology apart from what took place, once and for all, in the historical form of Jesus of Nazareth, in the event known as the incarnation. At the same time, it must be added that revelation did not cease with the incarnation, that the power of God to reveal Himself through His Son did not stop with crucifixion or vanish with the resurrection and ascension. Rather on the foundation laid down so conclusively and uniquely in the incarnation, Jesus Christ was revealed by God to be the same yesterday, today and forever. The intercessory work of Christ was made known in the giving of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost. Thus the next task of theological anthropology is to consider Jesus Christ as the Intercessor.

## 2. Jesus Christ, the sole Intercessor between God and man.

It has been said that no discussion of the problem of the imago Dei is valid or possible apart from what has happened in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in and through his human nature, and thus in an event which is now pure past, unrepeatable and irremovable. But as it was stated in the last paragraph, the image of God could have no meaning in theology and for the Church, were not the benefits won by Christ capable of transmission to man amidst the flow of temporal events. A real participation in the nature of Christ as the image of God must be possible in the present. This is what is meant by the work of Christ as the sole intercessor between God and man. Theological anthropology must therefore avail itself of the apostolic view of Christ as the One through whom the Spirit of God reaches man.

The Scriptures not only record what took place in the earthly form of Jesus, in his life, teaching, healing, and preaching, in his suffering and death, but they also record what took place **after his death**, in the resurrection, ascension, and intercession. Jesus Christ died, but on the third day He rose again and now sits at the right hand of God, interceding on behalf of sinners. On the day of Pentecost that intercession

became actual. They who awaited the fulfilment of the promise of the Spirit were suddenly made conscious of the presence of Christ in their midst ; they became aware of reality of the words : "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end." (Matt. 28. 20b). Thus the word 'intercession' is the symbol which signifies that all who believe in what was done once and for all in Jesus Christ, in life, death and resurrection, may actually participate in the revelation of the Word of God and may thus be conformed to the image of God in the midst of all their creatureliness and sin. Thus the justification and reconciliation wrought by Christ in the Cross become humanly possible through the intercessory work of the exalted Lord. As Paul has said : "For all things are yours ; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's (1 Cor. 3. 21-23).

Similarly it is through faith in the present intercessory work of Christ that the apostle is able to say : "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ : by whom also we **have access** by faith into this grace wherein we stand .... and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also : knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience experience, and experience, hope : and hope maketh not ashamed **because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.**" (Rom. 5. 1-3). By his relation to the image of God lost in Adam, Paul is convinced that all men are condemned ; but by his relation to the image restored in Christ, he believes that in faith all are justified. "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all unto condemnation ; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." (Rom. 5.18).

Conformity to Christ is clearly impossible apart from the work of the Holy Spirit and it is Christ who gives the Spirit to all who believe. The coming of the Spirit means dying to sin even as Christ died on the Cross : it also means

rising again to true freedom and righteousness, just as Christ rose from the dead (Rom. 6.5.) It is the Spirit who makes possible to man the fruit of Christ's unique victory. By the Spirit, the Church is given Christ crucified and resurrected. But it is only Christ the Intercessor who can bestow the gift of the Spirit, and it is only God the Father who can make Christ the vehicle of intercession, so that in the ultimate analysis it is only God in His Word, Jesus Christ, in the power of His Spirit, who can actualise the image of Himself in human experience, as the type of life characterised in the Sermon on the Mount, or in what Paul describes as glorying in tribulations, patience, experience, and hope.

In view of these statements, it may be seen that the reality of the imago Dei is never spoken of as a permanent possession of man qua man, even in the sense of a religious man. In the Biblical testimony the image of God in man is regarded as real only in the sense of **becoming real**, in the event in which by the power of the Spirit Christ becomes a present reality. In this way, and in this way alone, Paul can and does say : "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Phil. 1.21). The image that is real, is real in faith and faith that is real, lives in obedience to Christ. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2. 17). It is this thought which leads to the consideration of Jesus Christ as our Hope of salvation.

### 3. Jesus Christ, the Hope of Salvation.

It has been stated that the true nature of man as the image of God was unfolded by the power of God's Spirit in the Word which became incarnate in Jesus Christ. It has also been stated that the work of Christ as the sole intercessor between God and man was necessary if the human participation in that nature were to become possible. There remains but one thing to add : the



thought of Jesus Christ, as the **Hope of salvation** must be considered in relation to the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. Such a consideration is essential, if it is only to safeguard theological anthropology against theocentrism.

As it has already been seen, the chief presupposition of theocentric theology was that the image of God revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and restored in faith, was automatically given over into the believer's permanent experience, possession, and grasp, as though the divine initiative in revelation could be transferred from God to man. This had the effect of giving to the religious consciousness an authoritative claim in the determination of doctrine. The Biblical conception of Christ as the Hope of salvation successfully protects theology and the church from these ideas, **because it represents the final revelation of the image of God, as an event the occurrence of which will take place in a future which God alone in His Word is to determine.**

This means that **even as a present experience real in faith, conformity to God yet remains a mystery.** The Scriptures provide no grounds for pious boasting or presumption. As Paul says : "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. **For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory**" (Col. 3. 1-4). Christ was thus Paul's certain **Hope of salvation.** The image of God was a mystery hid with Christ in God. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him ; **for we shall see Him as He is.**" (1 John 3.2).

With this quotation, the subject of the *imago Dei* in theological anthropology might well be closed, for it suggests the limitations as well as the scope of the sphere in which there may be obtained sound results. As it was stated in the beginning of this Chapter,

the imago Dei is a **theological** not a general anthropological concern. This is borne out by what is said in the next Chapter on the crucial problem of theological anthropology, namely, the problem of sin.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The basis for the statements made above was found in Karl Barth's 'Evangelium und Bildung,' Theologische Studien, No. 2, 1938, pp. 15-22.

CHAPTER 7. The Relationship of Sin to the Imago Dei.

In the previous Chapters, it was seen that the constructive inquiry of theology into the subject of the image of God resolved itself into an investigation of what was done, and will be done in and through Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1. 15). But, it may now be asked : is there no sphere of research permissible in theology wherein the subject is **man** ? This question at once raises the problem of sin in its relation to the image of God. "If there were a special Reformed doctrine of **man**, a special Reformed anthropology," says Barth, "it could in point of fact only consist in the doctrine of **sin**."<sup>1</sup>

According to the testimony of the Biblical witnesses, the story of man is nothing else than the story of his continual falling away from glory, his continual rejection of the divine calling, his continual forsaking of the covenant in which he promises to give glory to God alone. Men left to their own devices and schemes make no attempt to conform themselves to God's image. On the contrary, they vainly set themselves up as lords of their own existence ; they live and act as though they were gods. Continually they stand in need of that divine reminder in which threat, command, and promise are so remarkably combined : "Be still, and know that I am **GOD** !" (Ps. 46.10a).<sup>2</sup> Man is thus marked in the Biblical record of revelation, not by his likeness or conformity to the Word of God, but by his separation from and rebellion against that Word, that is to say, by sin. "What is our Sin ?" Barth says : "It is what we are and what we do, in spite of which God comes to us in the man Jesus Christ, as he came then to

1. Karl Barth, The Knowledge of God and the Service of God, The Gifford Lectures, 1938, p.46.

<sup>2</sup> See the Appendix (p. 128).



Peter in the ship. What is our debt ? It is the showing of the gratitude which God has brought about and made efficacious for all of us in the man Jesus Christ. What is our punishment ? It is the infinite agony which it cost God Himself to take our place in the man Jesus Christ, in order that we should not have to suffer. Is it nothing besides ? No, nothing besides. In this way alone is there real, serious and Christian knowledge of our sin, debt and punishment - it is the essence of the **regeneration** of man as elected in God's free grace which the Scottish Confession describes (at the end of Article 3) as man's only salvation, that it, since it is identical with **faith** in Jesus Christ awakened in us by the Holy Spirit, necessitates **this** knowledge of our sin, guilt and punishment and precludes any other."<sup>1</sup>

It is **grace** which exposes **sin**. Grace means the condescension of God, the act in which God Himself becomes man in order to restore to the sinner the imago Dei lost through sin. The full extent and import of this act of self-humiliating love, are, however, unknown and unrevealed save in the Cross. "What do we know of the darkness, the plight and the depths of human life without the light of revelation which breaks through the darkness ? How could man know that he had sinned against God and that he is against God, unless he knew that **god is for him** ?"<sup>2</sup> It is because Jesus **died**, that the horror of sin and the universal magnitude and depth of the Fall of man is known. Not until God was revealed in Jesus Christ as Reconciler was it conclusively known that sin means separation from God. Nor is there any knowledge of God as Creator apart from the knowledge of God as Reconciler. In Christ it is known for the first time that man is lost and that the image of God is completely obscured by sin. In Christ it is known also for the first time that man can be conformed to the image of God.

1. *ibid.*, p. 53.

2. *ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

It follows upon this view of the relation between the knowledge of grace and the confession of sin, that it is impossible to consider man as he is on the basis of creation, in separation from man as he is on the basis of reconciliation and redemption. Abraham from 'afar off,' just as surely as the apostles who were 'nigh!', worshipped the one Christ. Only through the knowledge of God through His Word does the knowledge of man, as created, reconciled, and redeemed become humanly possible. Revelation is always a revelation of grace. Revelation always means a knowledge of sin, a knowledge of man as a fallen creature. Because in faith man is restored to favour with God, so in faith man knows God as his Creator-Father. The fundamental fallacy in natural theology is that it abstracts creation from reconciliation and redemption and attempts to proceed to theological knowledge from a study of man's possibilities as a creature. As a result of this abstraction, two opposed misconceptions of the relation between the imago Dei and sin appear, the first pessimistic and the second optimistic in character.

According to the pessimistic view, the history of man represents a gradual declension or deterioration in human nature. According to the optimistic view, on the other hand, man is pictured as rising gradually in spite of reverses and as progressing inevitably towards a far-distant but ever more realisable Goal of perfection. Both views are false, for in the first instance, it is not acknowledged that man as a fallen sinner is not known apart from the grace in which God seeks to reconcile and redeem him (the doctrine of original sin is inseparably related to the doctrine of grace), while in the second instance, it is forgotten that the rise of man to favour with God cannot be considered apart from the fall of man through sin into disfavour with God. Neither pessimism nor optimism finds a place in the theological analysis of the nature of sin. The study of the imago Dei could not end on a better note than this. **By the grace of God in His Word, Jesus Christ, the image of God defaced and distorted beyond recognition through sin is actually restored.**



CHAPTER 8. Biblical Foundations.

Throughout the previous Chapters, the doctrine of the *imago Dei* was constructively stated along the lines taken by theology in the works of Professor Karl Barth and the relationship of this doctrine to the doctrine of the Word of God was made a theme of continuously central interest. But there remains a final task to be undertaken, a final question to be answered. This task may be expressed, this question asked in the following forms :

does the foregoing conception of the relation between the Word of God and the *imago Dei* represent a conclusion in sound conformity with Scriptural foundations ? Are the views of sin and the image of God which this relation implies, Biblically valid? Is the theology with which this discourse has endeavoured to unite itself, the result of genuine, dependable exegesis ?

Clearly everything will either stand or fall according to the way in which this question of Biblical foundations is answered. Truly it may be said in theology as in everything else that "except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." (Ps. 127, 1). If the Biblical foundations of this theology are insecure, then is the work of this research in vain. If on the other hand, these foundations are solid, the possibility emerges that what has been written may have some value for the service of the Church in the proclamation of God's Word.<sup>p</sup>

It is therefore the object of this Chapter to give attention to the question of the Biblical basis of the doctrine which has been given formal articulation. This question resolves itself broadly into a consideration of two subjects which in their relation and difference have already served to bring into clear expression the relationship of the Word of God to the image of God. These subjects are firstly, the Biblical view of sin, and secondly, the Biblical view of the image of God, since just as it is sin which destroys the relation between God

<sup>p</sup> It must however be added that this possibility only becomes actual in the event of real proclamation of the Word of God. Theology can thus never be an end in itself.



and man, so it is the imago Dei which as the work of God in His Word represents the restoration of that relation.

(1) The Biblical View of Sin.

This subject naturally falls under two headings, the Old Testament view and the New Testament view, though, as it has been previously stated, this distinction does not imply a fundamental separation.<sup>1</sup> For purposes of convenience, the two views will now be given individual treatment.

a. The Old Testament view.

In relation to this extensive and profound subject, no less an authority than the late Professor A.B. Davidson may be quoted as expressing a sound conception of the Old Testament statements concerning the nature and consequences of sin, a conception, moreover, which is more than favourably disposed towards the doctrine of sin which has been given recognition in this thesis.

According to the judgment of this great scholar, the Biblical writers shew a considerable variation in their ideas of sin, and yet certain uniform inferences may be derived from a study of them, which enable theology to construct a doctrinal presentation of the subject.

Thus, says Davidson, it may be said that the Old Testament teaches the threefold fact that all individual men are sinners, that the sinfulness of each individual is no isolated thing but an instance of general social sinfulness, and that the sin of man, individually and collectively, can only be taken away by God's forgiveness (Mic.vii,18). It follows that the sin of the one is the sin of the many, that guilt by being social does not cease to be individual, nor by being individual does it cease to be social. It also follows that the individual and social remedy for sin is the same, and that just as sin is one and indivisible, so is grace. As Barth would say, sin **is** sin and grace **is** grace.

In conformity with this view, Paul writing in later times was able to speak of all men falling in the person of one representative man, Adam, through sin, and of all having the

1. A.B. Davidson, "The Theology of the Old Testament",  
p. 217.  
<sup>1</sup> p.p. 79, 131 (thesis).

possibility **in faith** of restoration to favour with God, through grace, in the person of one representative man, Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> A recurring theme in Davidson's book, "The Theology of the Old Testament," is that "the Old Testament teaching regarding sin **does not differ** from that of the New Testament."<sup>1</sup> This a most suggestive and significant statement and greatly simplifies the task of determining the Biblical view of sin. Important too, is his analysis of the Hebrew words for sin used in the Bible.

In the first place there is the word  $\aleph \underbrace{\cup}_{\tau} \pi$ . This, says Davidson, refers to the negative aspect of sin, seen in the failure of man **to correspond to** an objective standard of righteousness set by God. Like the Greek word  $\acute{\alpha}\mu\alpha\rho\tau\alpha\nu\omega$  it implies a falling short of the mark. Then there is the word  $\underbrace{\cup}_{\tau} \underbrace{\cup}_{\tau} \underbrace{\cup}_{\tau}$  which has a thoroughly positive meaning and suggests that sin is a positive act of rebellion against God, and His external magisterial authority. This word brings out the personal, voluntary character of sin as an act of man set at variance to the purpose of God. In the Westminster Confession, both the positive and the negative aspects of sin are comprised within the classical or approved definition of sin as **'any want of conformity to or transgression of the law of God.'**

Accordingly, argues Davidson, sin denotes not only a lack of righteousness, or of a right relation to God, but a positive disobedience against the Holy One. For example, Joseph exclaims, "How then can I do a great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. 39, 9), while the Psalmist says: "Against Thee and Thee only, have I sinned" (Ps. 51, 4).

Furthermore, he maintains, the Old Testament clearly teaches **original sin**, that is, "that corruption of man's whole nature which is commonly called original sin," and also the fact that sin is **inherited**.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>6</sup> 1. Cor. 15, 22. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

1. *ibid.*, pp. 217, 231. (Cf. pp. 79, 131 (Thesis)).

2. *ibid.*, p. 225.

Although Davidson suggests that the view of sin which is presented deepens and becomes more inward or moral in the works of later writers, he declares that the supremely significant characteristic of the Old Testament view of sin is the fundamental and ineradicable antithesis between good and evil, right and wrong, righteousness and sin. "Thus to begin with," he says, "Scripture lays down at its beginning the categories of good and evil." (Gen. 1, 31).<sup>1</sup> "Man," he adds, "is in need, not only of a reformation, but of **a fundamental regeneration.**" (Jer. iv, 3,4).<sup>2</sup>

In a masterly exposition of Psalm 51, as illustrating the human consciousness of sin, Davidson makes a statement which may be taken as epitomizing his views on the Biblical idea of sin in the Old Testament. "These are some of the thoughts of sin," he says ; "its pollution ; its being inherited ; its being in truth, whatever form it may have outwardly, against God ; its tendency to encroach upon and swallow up the moral lights of the soul, till all that can be called the Holy Spirit is withdrawn ; and the true idea of a life in the world and an activity among men which is founded on righteousness."<sup>3</sup>

In reflecting upon the statements made by Davidson, it may be seen that there is nothing in them which would destroy the validity of the doctrine of sin already expressed. Indeed there is everything to support it. To quote one outstanding instance ; he asserts that "the anthropology of the Old Testament is a reflection of its theology : the sense or thought of sin corresponds to the conception and fear of Jehovah."<sup>4</sup> Surely the implications of this assertion are self-evident.

There is no Biblical anthropology without a Biblical **theology**. The doctrine of sin and of man's fallen nature is determined strictly in dependence on and by relation to the doctrine of God in His power as Creator-Father to restore to man through His Word what is sinful, fallen and lost. In the Old Testament, the conception of sin as a want of conformity to God's

1. *ibid.*, p. 205.

2. *ibid.*, p. 216.

3. *ibid.*, p. 234.

4. *ibid.*, p. 216.



Word or as open rebellion against God's Word, is always related to the thought of God either in His power to judge and punish the sinner or in His power to call out of the midst of a fallen creation, a people conforming to His Word and rejoicing in His statutes. The Old Testament view of man's original and inherited sin is never to be seen or considered apart from its view of God as a Covenant-Maker, as One therefore who descends and delivers man from his sin by gracious condescension. 'All families of the earth' are to be blessed through the 'seed of Abraham.' (Gen. 12, 3). The Fall of man as a conception basic to Biblical anthropology provides no excuse or opportunity for a general inquiry into human possibilities for revelation, but is inseparably related to and governed by the idea of God choosing a certain people to be the witness of His Word and to His Word before the nations. With these reflections, the Old Testament view of sin may be summarily concluded. The next problem consists in discovering whether the New Testament has anything to say on the subject of sin, different from what has already been said.

#### b. The New Testament View of Sin.

Professor G.B. Stevens in his book on New Testament theology presents a view of sin and of human nature which does not at all harmonise with that stated by Professor Davidson. The latter upholds the doctrine of original sin and declares the essential agreement of both Old and New Testaments on the matter. On the other hand, the former is just as convinced that man by nature is **not totally depraved** and that Jesus in his teaching never represented man in such a light.

In the eighth Chapter<sup>6</sup> of his book, entitled "The Theology of the New Testament," Stevens gives an analytical treatment of Jesus teaching in order to establish his contention. In this treatment, the following points are significantly made.

1. The life of every man, **as such, is of priceless value.**  
(Mt. 10, vv. 30, 31 ; Luke 6,7 ; Mt. 12, 12 ; Mk. 2, 27).
2. There is nothing more calamitous than the loss of man's true spiritual life. (See Mk. 8, 37 ; Mt. 16, 26 ; Luke 9, 25 ; Mk. 9, 43 ; Mt. 18, 8 ; Mt. 6. 25 ; Luke 12, 15 ; Mt. 5, 3-12).
3. The worst sinners still have worth in God's sight. (Mt. 11, 19). They respond by nature to His love. For example, the common people heard him gladly. (Mk. 12, 37). Jesus found the self-righteous the most difficult to redeem. (Luke 18, 9).
4. Despite human sinfulness, man has 'good impulses and tendencies.' For example, Jesus said : "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few." (Mt. 9, 37). Jesus found goodness in the most unexpected places. (Luke 10, 30-37).

"Had Jesus regarded human beings as totally depraved from the very beginning of life, had he believed that in consequence of the corrupt nature which all men inherit by birth, they were made 'opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually' (The Larger Westminster Catechism, Q. 25), as theology has so often taught, it is difficult to see how he could have made the child-spirit the test of fitness for his Kingdom. .... How could Jesus say this if he did not see natural goodness in children ; if human nature as such were that odious thing in the sight of God which it has so often been described as being ?"<sup>1</sup>

"Jesus saw in men a mixture of good and evil."<sup>2</sup> His view was not 'one-sided or extreme.'" He saw them as they were - neither wholly bad nor wholly good ; ignorant, perverted, and even wilfully wicked, yet not without good desires and aspirations ; lost but not hopeless. In all their unfilial indifference and disobedience, they were still, in his view, sons of God, susceptible to the appeal of a Father's love, and capable both of coming to themselves - their true, normal selves - and of returning to their Father."<sup>3</sup>

1. G.B. Stevens, "The Theology of the New Testament", p. 98.  
 2. *ibid.*, p. 98.  
 3. *ibid.*, p. 99.

5. The hope of the future life is grounded in 'man's essential kinship to God.'

Having analysed the conception of human nature in Jesus' teaching in the above terms, Professor Stevens proceeds to expound Jesus' conception of sin. The following points are made :

1. Sin is universal. Jesus said : "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mk. 2, 17b).
2. Sin has its seat in the human heart. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things : and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." (Mt. 12, 34a-35). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders .... foolishness : All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (Mk. 7, 20-23).
3. Not all men are equally sinful. There are degrees in human sinfulness. Sin is capable of development and may range from ignorance to a state of complete moral obduracy.' Jesus apparently "considered it possible for human sinfulness to culminate in that utter moral obliquity which he describes - in a depravity so radical and complete as to preclude the possibility of recovery to holiness." (Mk. 3, 28-29 ; Mt. 12, 31, 32).<sup>1</sup>

Such in brief are the conclusions of Professor Stevens concerning the subject of sin in the teaching of Jesus. Admittedly his method of presentation is masterly, while his selection of texts from the teaching of Jesus is sufficiently comprehensive to be imposing. Moreover the way in which he leads the investigator from the thought of the priceless value of human nature to the idea of sin and the consequences of sin until he reaches his climax in the thought of the possibility (though not the actuality) of total moral obliquity, appears most logical and convincing. But is Professor Stevens true to the New Testament view of sin and human nature ? Does he give an accurate estimate of Jesus' teaching on these subjects ? More particularly, is it possible to

1. *ibid.*, pp. 100-103.



argue on the grounds of the New Testament, that according to the mind of Jesus, man's total corruption is but the extreme and possible goal to which human sinfulness may actually lead ?

If theology is forced by the nature of the Biblical facts to answer these questions affirmatively, the entire trend taken by this thesis is wrong and altogether misleading. If, on the other hand, it can be shown that the Scriptural facts provide no real basis for the conclusions arrived at by Stevens, the doctrine of sin, already stated, may be considered as fundamentally sound. It is precisely here that the crux of the whole matter lies, for upon the conclusions of the book, entitled "The Theology of the New Testament," a natural theology must inevitably be erected.

Now, in the first place, it must appear strange, even to the most casual observer that Stevens should expound a view of human nature and sin, so different from that of Davidson. The integrality of the Old and New Testaments in their relation of prophecy to fulfilment would at once suggest quite another result.<sup>6</sup> If the doctrine of original and inherited sin and of the utter corruption of human nature, be the logical and necessary result of a study in the Old Testament view of sin and man, it does not seem possible that the New Testament should yield any other doctrine. It is also doubtful, even arguing from the most superficial knowledge of the facts, to suggest that Jesus with his profound knowledge of the Old Testament should in any way ignore or weaken its uncompromising and serious conception of sin. When the texts which form the background of Stevens' contention are studied from the point of vantage offered by these reflections, the nature of Jesus' teaching concerning sin will be seen in a completely different light.

As a result of a careful study of the textual material provided by Professor Stevens, it will at once be noted that where it was a case of giving a **direct exegesis** of what Jesus said, the statements made were in no way disputable. No one, for example, would wish to deny that Jesus taught the priceless worth of man in God's sight, or the calamitous character of the loss of man's spiritual life, or the hope of the future life as grounded

<sup>6</sup> See p. 79 (Thesis).

in 'man's essential kinship to God.' Nor could it be challenged that Jesus spoke of sin as universal and as having its seat in the human heart. These things are beyond question. The real difficulty does not arise here, but it does arise when statements are made which bear no direct relation to Jesus' utterances at all.

For instance, it is stated that Jesus saw in man 'good impulses and tendencies,' 'good desires and aspirations,' a mixture of good and evil.' This, according to Stevens, means that men, in spite of their sin, are still in the view of Jesus, 'sons of God, susceptible to the appeal of a Father's love.' The statement is also made that the child-like spirit was made the test of fitness for the divine Kingdom, because Jesus saw 'natural goodness in children.' But the supreme instance of an inference quite unrelated to Jesus' teaching comes when Stevens applies the principle of evolution to the conception of sin, by formulating a doctrine of degrees in human sinfulness, and of complete moral obduracy envisaged as the extreme goal and possibility of sin.

None of these statements has Biblical validity. Even if Jesus saw in man certain good 'impulses and tendencies,' as no doubt he did, he never made any recorded utterance to shew that his mission amongst men was to build upon and to develop out this natural material of goodness the kind of character or life which was pleasing in God's eyes. "I came," he said, "not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mk. 2, 17b). Professor Stevens also shews a complete misunderstanding of the text in Matthew 18, where Jesus is recorded to have said : "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." (v.3).

In this verse, Jesus was not illustrating his point from the fact of the natural goodness of the child. On the contrary, he was warning his disciples against the natural and perverted form taken by unregenerated impulses and tendencies. According to the natural reasoning of the disciples, there could be no greater goal of service than to be greatest in the kingdom. Indeed they quarrelled bitterly about it. But Jesus by saying what he did, clearly shewed them that as long as they remained as

they were, desirous of establishing for themselves a place of superlative merit in the kingdom of heaven, on the ground of their natural goodness, they would never enter the kingdom. They must therefore be changed and become as little children. The word '**as**' is the significant word. In order to be conformed to the Word of God, men must become, not children, but **as** children. The human child's relation of devotion to and dependence on its parents is thus taken by Jesus to be **the perfect analogy** of the true human relation to God, lost through sin. The analogy would cease to be effective or true, if it were possible to argue from it, as Professor Stevens does, to man's natural susceptibility and capacity for revelation.

The teaching of the New Testament on the subject of human nature is in complete conformity with the teaching of Jesus. Jesus believed in man's total depravity. He knew that without the grace of God man's case is not only hopeless but lost. For this reason the Cross is central to the understanding of his life. He was born to die. The necessity of the Cross implies the lostness of man. Man must die to himself in order to live to God. Before God revealed in Jesus Christ there are no degrees in human sinfulness, but only sin, the complete separation of man from God. As in the Old Testament so in the New, and in the most tangible form (in the person of the incarnate Word), the graciousness of grace may only be understood by relation to the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Only in what was done by God in Jesus Christ, can the essential kinship of God to man, the hope of the future life, and the value of every man in the sight of God, be known and confessed.

It is this final thought in the study of the Biblical view of sin which provides the logical link with the concluding subject of this investigation.

## 2. The Biblical View of the Imago Dei.

Throughout the critical and constructive work of this piece of research, the question which was being continually



asked was simply : what does the Bible say concerning the imago Dei ? It is this question which is of supreme moment. In order to answer it, one thing must be made clear.

The meaning of the imago Dei in theology and through theology in Church proclamation, will not be arrived at merely by collecting, collating, and synthesising the various passages of Scripture in which reference is made to the image. The results of such a procedure, if they could be achieved, would be confusing, since the word 'image' has a wide range of signification. For example, 'image' may mean the original nature imparted to man in creation (Gen. 1. 26). It may also mean the form in which man idolatrously seeks to worship God or the gods (Rom. 1. 23), as in the case of the golden calf (Exod. 32, 4), or in worship of Diana of the Ephesians (Acts 19, 35). It may mean the earthly likeness which man bears to man (1 Cor. 15. 49a.). Thus the danger of ambiguity of statement arises and the necessity of defining the use made of this term is sufficiently indicated.

In the course of what has been stated in preceding pages, the phrase 'imago Dei' has been accredited with having but one unambiguous Biblical significance. It has been used to signify the image of God, the image, therefore, which only God can reflect amidst the earthly realities which contradict His nature and being. The image in this sense is the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ. The Biblical conception of the imago is thus taken to mean only what is possible in and through the living, spoken, and creative Word of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1. 15).

From the point of view of the Bible, the image of God is never conceived as a static possession of man, inherent in human nature, and permanently visible in the form of religious piety. On the contrary, it is a dynamic conception, deriving its validity for man, solely from the idea of God's action or Word in time, and therefore from the idea of that divine creativeness without which neither the world nor the Church would be thinkable (Col. 1. 16-17). John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, gives classic expression to this conception in the words : "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we

beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1. 14). The image of God exists in the activity of God's Word, and in no other way (Cor. 3. 18). It is grounded in the sovereign power of God to conform man to Himself, in the freedom of the Word, spoken or revealed in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8. 29).

This creativeness of God in His Word, by which alone the imago Dei becomes a human possibility, may not, however, be interpreted from a Biblical standpoint, as indicating a relationship of conformity between man and God already existing and forming a basis upon which that creativeness may come into play. For instance, the coming of Christ in the form of a little child, did not serve to reveal a dignity and worth peculiar to human nature, apart from such a revelation altogether. On the contrary, the act of God in His incarnate Word, created a new relationship ; it brought into being a fresh establishment of man's kinship to God ; it constituted the human possibility of a re-awakening to an original righteousness, completely obscured or lost through sin (Col. 3. 10 ; 1 Cor. 15. 49). It follows that a radical change must take place in a man when in faith he is addressed by God in His Word (Rom. 8. 29). Through Jesus Christ, they who believe are actually conformed to the like-ness of God, and thus participate in Christ's hidden and eternal sonship with God. But in this human experience of conformity, the active and determinative factor is God in His creative Word ; God is Lord in and over His own reflection, or image. Both Testaments bear record in different ways to this conception of the Imago Dei.

Revelation in the Old Testament must be taken as having a prophetic relation to the New Testament witness to Christ. For example, the events which are described in Exodus Chapter 32 provide Church proclamation with a portrait in which by way of anticipation may be seen the New Testament record of Jesus' works and words. The image of God is given its prophetic form in the Tables of the Law, on which it is expressly stated that no earthly likeness to God, formed by man can be



acceptable in God's sight (Exod. 20. 4). At the same time, the idea of God's utter freedom in self-revelation is conserved by the recorded appearance of a cloud, which hid the glory of God from the unhallowed gaze of the people, on the heights of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 24. 15). In the New Testament, the same idea finds expression as an earthly event in the darkness which hid from human eyes the suffering form of him in whom was revealed the perfect Image of God (Mt. 27. 45). Further illustrations of the same relation of Old Testament to New may be given.

The conference of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu together with the seventy elders of Israel, prior to Moses' ascent into the mystery of Mt. Sinai, is prophetic of the Last Supper, in which Jesus had fellowship with his disciples before his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascent into the veiled glory of God's presence. Again, the descent of Moses, bearing the Tables of Stone in his hand (Exod. 35.15), points to the coming of Christ in the flesh, out of the hidden glory of God into the lowly sphere of man. Thus, too, the breaking of the Tables of Stone by Moses, when he beheld the idolatry of his people in the worship of the golden calf, and the necessary punishment which followed through the shedding of blood, are significant and prophetic signs of the breaking of Christ's body in face of the sin of the world (Ex. 32. 19). Nor in the Old Testament is the thought of the sufferings and Atonement of Christ neglected (Ex. 32, 30). In Moses and the prophets, in the wanderings, rebellion, suffering, and repentance of Israel, there may be seen reflected the nature of the Church and the Church's Lord, while in the covenant of righteousness established between the chosen people and God may be seen in anticipation the objective will of God, which in Jesus Christ was perfectly fulfilled. As Jesus said : "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mt. 5. 17).

From these considerations, it is argued that both the Old and the New Testaments bear record to the 'one imago Dei,' and thus to the Word which became flesh in Jesus Christ. With this thought of the Biblical conception of the 'imago Dei', the work of research naturally concludes.



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A P P E N D I X .

PSALM 46.10. "Be still ! and know that I am God."

The age in which we live is one in which man's power is so great that he appears to have controlled the natural world itself. Whereas once the birds were monarchs of the air, and the fish of the sea, now man can fly to the highest heights of heaven, and swim to the deepest depths of the sea, by means of his mechanical inventions. **Today** we see man at the pinnacle of his power, the supreme evidence of which is to be noticed in this war, when one man with a single, small movement of his hand can release a bomb which can devastate all that is beneath and shake the earth for miles around.

**But today**, more than ever, we need to remind ourselves of the voice of God speaking in tones of thunderous threat through the mouth of the psalmist of old. We need to hear **His Word** in the words :

"Be still ! and know that I am **God**."

In the first place, let us observe **the threat of power used** in these words. "Be still! and **know** that I am **God**." Here is one who will not be trifled with, one speaking in the full consciousness of His Almighty Power. His patience has been tried too long. He is tired of the boast and pomp of man, weary of human conceit, impatient of being continually ignored and forgotten, while man magnifies his own power. At last ! like a giant from his slumbers, He rises and speaks : "Be still ! and **know** that I am **God**." Can't you hear the threat of power in the words ? **He, God**, will speak ! He will act ! and Nature will be the mighty weapon of His Almighty wrath and destructiveness.

He can send fires, sweeping uncontrolled throughout the land, destroying all in their path.

He can send droughts to ruin the harvests, and floods to inundate the soil.

He can send plagues to kill thousands.

And He can send earthquakes which cause the very

bowels of the earth to move and send the high mountains toppling into the sea.

When we think of these evidences of His power, how puny, how feeble is Hitler's Blitzkrieg ! How ridiculous are men !

Can you hear the threat of power in the words ? With a single **Word**, God can cause all wars to cease. "Be still ! The very words breathe power. God speaks and <sup>at</sup> His Word man fades into insignificance.

But in the second place, can we not all hear **the note of command in the words** ?

**"BE STILL !** and know that I am God."

The psalmist pictures many bands of pilgrims, marching towards the Holy City of God. As these advance, they perceive that they are facing a ruthless, implacable foe. Frightened, perplexed, and over-awed by the might and power of what faces them, they are seen to waver, to hesitate - as if to flee. The reason is understandable, for the enemy is like a great black cloud, like grasshoppers for multitude. There seems no hope for the wavering army of righteousness. All seems lost, when, suddenly, the General of the army turns upon his men and issues the command : "Be still ! and know that I am here." The words act like a tonic on the wavering men. They fall into line and as one band face the foe with courage, hope and even confidence ; for the General has spoken !

**So today**, many are wavering before the might and power of an earthly foe. There seems no way out. Gradually famous landmarks of history are being obliterated. House after house is vanishing. We are tempted to give up, so great, so overwhelming appears the adversary. We waver - and yet as we waver, the voice of the 'General' speaks **in tones of command : "Be still !** Do not retreat ! Do not give way ; and know that I am God."



What a world of encouragement lies in these words. What a tonic to our souls to know that God is still **Master of the situation**. We cannot lose hope. The struggle must go on. It is His Will and there is nothing for us but to obey.

"Be still ! and know that I am God."

The threat of power, the command of authority - we can hear them both in the words of the text. **But there is another note, hidden behind the words**. We must not fail to hear it too. For it gives the key to the meaning of what is spoken by God through the lips of the psalmist.

"Be still ! and know that **I** am God." There is the note of **promise**.

People say today that it is impossible to pray for victory over our foes, for they argue : why should God especially favour us more than another nation ?

It is hard, in fact, impossible, to pray for mere victory. But we can and should pray for victory of right over wrong. And one thing is certain ; what we oppose is an evil, cursed thing. What drove our country to take up arms is a cruel, merciless, God-less thing. This parading of force, this flaunting and boasting of oppressors, this threatening and bludgeoning of the weak, this ruthless murder of civilians, this perverted and indescribable persecution of the Jews, this suppression of the freedom to speak God's Word in its unimpeachable sovereignty - this is not the way of Christ, but of **sin, death, and hell**.

"Be still ! and know that **I** am God."

We believe ; we pray that our cause may be God's cause, and that the victory will be to us. But whatever happens, we may be sure that it will be for His glory, because He has promised it. And **beyond that**, there is that promise which transcends all others - **the promise of eternal life**.

"Be still ! and know that **I** am God."

Who is **I** but the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ ? Who is Jesus but the one who died for us on the Cross and rose

again to victory and eternal life ?

**The promise of eternal life** in the midst of the horrors, troubles, sufferings, calamities, wars and sin of this life - Yes ! that and no less is the hidden message of the words,

"Be still ! and know that I am God."

Sermon preached at Toowong Presbyterian Church, October 20th, 1940, evening,  
7.30. . . .

**NOTE.** This sermon illustrates three points of essential theological interest, raised during the course of the foregoing thesis. There is the thought of God's **Lordship in creation and redemption**, an idea mentioned on pages 20-27 and later developed on pages 45-48 in the discussion concerning the **mystery** of God's revelation. Then there is the thought of the **content** of promise hidden in the **form** of the command '**Be still !**' an idea expounded in the third Part of the thesis on pages 73-75. Finally, there is the idea of the **integrality** of the Old and New Testaments, expressed in the thought that the '**I' who utters the words 'Be still ! and know that I am God,'** is the God and Father who spoke once and for all in the person of Jesus Christ, **the incarnate Word**. This is one of <sup>the</sup> leading conceptions of the research which has just ensued, and was mentioned as one of the underlying principles of theology on pages 78, 79, 80, 112, 113 (A. B. Davidson's statement regarding the Old and the New Testament view of sin), 118, 120, 122, 123.

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